

*David C. Lighter*

LETTERS

ON THE

STUDY and USE

OF

HISTORY.

To which are added,

TWO other LETTERS, and REFLECTIONS  
UPON EXILE, by the same Hand.

In TWO VOLUMES.



(1)  
LETTERS

ON THE  
LETTERS

STUDY and USE

ON THE

OF

STUDY and USE  
HISTORY.

By the late RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY ST. JOHN,

TO WHICH ARE ADDED  
LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

Two other Letters, and Reflections  
from the same Hand.  
VOL. I.

DUBLIN.

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OF THE

# STUDY OF HISTORY



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CLIMATE  
AND  
ENVIRONMENT  
AND  
HUMANITY

OF THE  
STUDY of HISTORY.

LETTER I.

Chantelou in Touraine, Nov. 6, 1735.

MY LORD,

I HAVE considered formerly, with a good deal of attention, the subject on which you command me to communicate my thoughts to you : and I practised in those days, as much as business and pleasure allowed me time to do, the rules that seemed to me necessary to be observed in the study of history. They were very different from those which writers on the same subject have recommended, and which are commonly practised. But I confess to your lordship that this neither gave me then, nor has given me since, any distrust of them. I do not

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affect singularity. On the contrary I think that a due deference is to be paid to received opinions, and that a due compliance with received customs is to be held; tho' both the one and the other should be, what they often are, absurd or ridiculous. But this servitude is outward only, and abridges in no sort the liberty of private judgment. The obligations of submitting to it likewise, even outwardly, extend no further, than to those opinions and customs which cannot be opposed; or from which we cannot deviate without doing hurt, or giving offence, to society. In all these cases, our speculations ought to be free: in all other cases, our practice may be so. Without any regard therefore to the opinion and practice even of the learned world, I am very willing to tell you mine. But as it is hard to recover a thread of thought long ago laid aside, and impossible to prove some things and explain others, without the assistance of many books which I have not here; your lordship must be content with such an imperfect sketch, as I am able to send you at present in this letter.

THE motives that carry men to the study of history are different. Some intend, if such as they may be said to study, nothing more than amusement, and read the life





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of ARISTIDES or PHOCION, of EPAMINONDAS or SCIPIO, ALEXANDER or CÆSAR, just as they play a game at cards, or as they would read the story of the seven champions.

OTHERS there are, whose motive to this study is nothing better, and who have the further disadvantage of becoming a nuisance very often to society, in proportion to the progress they make. The former do not improve their reading to any good purpose: the latter pervert it to a very bad one, and grow in impertinence as they encrease in learning. I think I have known most of the first kind in England, and most of the last in France. The persons I mean are those who read to talk, to shine in conversation, and to impose in company: who, having few ideas to vend of their own growth, store their minds with crude un-ruminated facts and sentences; and hope to supply, by bare memory, the want of imagination and judgment.

BUT these are in the two lowest forms. The next I shall mention are in one a little higher; in the form of those who grow neither wiser nor better by study themselves, but who enable others to study with greater ease, and to purposes more useful: who

make fair copies of foul manuscripts, give the signification of hard words, and take a great deal of other grammatical pains. The obligation to these men would be great indeed, if they were in general able to do any thing better, and submitted to this drudgery for the sake of the public; as some of them, it must be owned with gratitude, have done, but not later, I think, than about the time of the resurrection of letters. When works of importance are pressing, generals themselves may take up the pick-axe and the spade; but in the ordinary course of things, when that pressing necessity is over, such tools are left in the hands destined to use them, the hands of common soldiers and peasants. I approve therefore very much the devotion of a studious man at Christ-church, who was over-heard in his oratory entering into a detail with God, as devout persons are apt to do, and amongst other particular thanksgivings, acknowledging the divine goodness in furnishing the world with makers of Dictionaries! These men court fame, as well as their betters, by such means as God has given them to acquire it: and LITTLETON exerted all the genius he had, when he made a dictionary, tho' STEPHENS did not. They deserve encouragement

## Of the STUDY of HISTORY. 5

agement however, whilst they continue to compile, and neither affect wit, nor presume to reason.

THERE is a fourth class, of much less use than these, but of much greater name. Men of the first rank in learning, and to whom the whole tribe of scholars bow with reverence. A man must be as indifferent as I am to common censure or approbation, to avow a thorough contempt for the whole business of these learned lives ; for all the researches into antiquity, for all the systems of chronology and history, that we owe to the immense labours of a SCALIGER, a BOCHART, a PETAVIUS, an USHER, and even a MARSHAM. The same materials are common to them all ; but these materials are few, and there is a moral impossibility that they should ever have more. They have combined these into every form that can be given to them : they have supposed, they have guessed, they have joined disjointed passages of different authors, and broken traditions of uncertain originals, of various people, and of centuries remote from one another as well as from ours. In short, that they might leave no liberty untaken, even a wild fantastical similitude of sounds has served to prop up a system. As the materials they have

## 6 LETTER I.

are few, so are the very best and such as pass for authentic extremely precarious; as some of these learned persons themselves confess.

JULIUS AFRICANUS, EUSEBIUS, and GEORGE the monk opened the principal sources of all this science; but they corrupted the waters. Their point of view was to make profane history and chronology agree with sacred; tho' the latter chronology is very far from being established, with the clearness and certainty necessary to make it a rule. For this purpose, the ancient monuments, that these writers conveyed to posterity, were digested by them according to the system they were to maintain: and none of these monuments were delivered down, in their original form, and genuine purity. The Dynasties of MANETHO, for instance, are broken to pieces by EUSEBIUS, and such fragments of them as suited his design are stuck into his work. We have, we know, no more of them. The Codex Alexandrinus we owe to GEORGE the monk. We have no other authority for it: and one cannot see without amazement such a man as Sir JOHN MARSHAM undervaluing this authority in one page, and building his system upon it in the next. He seems even by the lightness of his expressions, if I remember well,



well, for it is long since I looked into his canon, not to be much concerned what foundation his system had, so he shewed his skill in forming one, and in reducing the immense antiquity of the Egyptians within the limits of the Hebraic calculation. In short, my lord, all these systems are so many enchanted castles, they appear to be something, they are nothing but appearances: like them too, dissolve the charm, and they vanish from the sight. To dissolve the charm, we must begin at the beginning of them: the expression may be odd, but it is significant. We must examine scrupulously and indifferently the foundations on which they lean: and when we find these either faintly probable, or grossly improbable, it would be foolish to expect any thing better in the super-structure. This science is one of those that are a *limine salutandæ*. To do thus much may be necessary, that grave authority may not impose on our ignorance: to do more, would be to assist this very authority in imposing false science upon us. I had rather take the DARIUS whom ALEXANDER conquered for the son of HYSTASPES, and make as many anachronisms as a Jewish chronologer, than sacrifice half my life to collect all the learned lumber that fills the head of an antiquary.

OF THE  
STUDY of HISTORY.

LETTER II.

Concerning the true use and advantages  
of it.

**L**ET me say something of history in general, before I descend into the consideration of particular parts of it, or of the various methods of study, or of the different views of those that apply themselves to it, as I had begun to do in my former letter.

THE love of history seems inseparable from human nature, because it seems inseparable from self-love. The same principle in this instance carries us forward and backward, to future and past ages. We imagine that the things, which affect us, must affect posterity: this sentiment runs through mankind, from CÆSAR down to the

the parish clerk in POPE's miscellany. We are fond of preserving, as far as it is in our frail power, the memory of our own adventures, of those of our own time, and of those that preceded it. Rude heaps of stone have been raised, and ruder hymns have been composed, for this purpose, by nations who had not yet the use of arts and letters. To go no further back, the triumphs of ODIN were celebrated in runic songs, and the feats of our British ancestors were recorded in those of their bards. The savages of America have the same custom at this day: and long historical ballads of their huntings and their wars are sung at all their festivals. There is no need of saying how this passion grows among civilized nations, in proportion to the means of gratifying it: but let us observe that the same principle of nature directs us as strongly, and more generally as well as more early, to indulge our own curiosity, instead of preparing to gratify that of others. The child harkens with delight to the tales of his nurse, he learns to read, and he devours with eagerness fabulous legends and novels. In riper years he applies himself to history, or to that which he takes for history, to authorized romance: and even in age, the desire, of  
 B 5 knowing

knowing what has happened to other men, yields to the desire alone of relating what has happened to ourselves. Thus history, true or false, speaks to our passions always. What pity is it, my lord, that even the best should speak to our understandings so seldom? That it does so, we have none to blame but ourselves. Nature has done her part. She has opened this study to every man who can read and think : and what she has made the most agreeable, reason can make the most useful, application of our minds. But if we consult our reason, we shall be far from following the examples of our fellow-creatures, in this as in most other cases, who are so proud of being rational. We shall neither read to soothe our indolence, nor to gratify our vanity : as little shall we content ourselves to drudge like grammarians and critics, that others may be able to study, with greater ease and profit, like philosophers and statesmen : as little shall we affect the slender merit of becoming great scholars at the expence of groping all our lives in the dark mazes of antiquity. All these mistake the true drift of study, and the true use of history. Nature gave us curiosity to excite the industry of our minds ; but she never intended it should be made the principal,  
much



much less the sole, object of their application. The true and proper object of this application, is a constant improvement in private and in public virtue. An application to any study, that tends neither directly nor indirectly to make us better men and better citizens, is at best but a specious and ingenious sort of idleness to use an expression of TILLOTSON : and the knowledge we acquire by it is a creditable kind of ignorance, nothing more. This creditable kind of ignorance is, in my opinion, the whole benefit which the generality of men, even of the most learned, reap from the study of history : and yet the study of history seems to me, of all other, the most proper to train us up to private and public virtue.

YOUR lordship may very well be ready by this time, and after so much bold censure on my part, to ask me what then is the true use of history ? in what respects it may serve to make us better and wiser ? and what method is to be pursued in the study of it, for attaining these great ends ? I will answer you by quoting what I have read some where or other, in DIONYSIUS HALICARN. I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples. We need but to cast our eyes on the world, and we shall see

see the daily force of example; we need but to turn them inward, and we shall soon discover why example has this force. "Pauci prudentiâ, says TACITUS, "honestas ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt: plures aliorum eventis docentur." Such is the imperfection of human understanding, such the frail temper of our minds, that abstract or general propositions, tho never so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often, till they are explained by examples; and that the wisest lessons in favour of virtue go but a little way to convince the judgment, and determine the will, unless they are enforced by the same means, and we are obliged to apply to ourselves what we see happen to other men. Instructions by precept have the further disadvantage of coming on the authority of others, and frequently require a long deduction of reasoning. "Homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt: longum iter est per præcepta, breve & efficax per exempla." The reason of this judgment, which I quote from one of SENECA's epistles in confirmation of my own opinion, rests I think on this; that when examples are pointed out to us, there is a kind of appeal, with which we are flattered, made to our senses, as well as our understandings.

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The instruction comes then upon our own authority : we frame the precept after our own experience, and yield to fact when we resist speculation. But this is not the only advantage of instruction by example ; for example appeals not to our understanding alone, but to our passions likewise. Example asswages these, or animates them ; sets passion on the side of judgment, and makes the whole man of a piece, which is more than the strongest reasoning and the clearest demonstration can do : and thus forming habits by repetition, example secures the observance of those precepts which example insinuated. Is it not PLINY, my lord, who says, that the gentlest, he should have added the most effectual way of commanding, is by example ? “ Mitiùs jubetur exemplo.” The harshest orders are softened by example, and tyranny itself becomes perswasive. What pity it is that so few princes have learned this way of commanding ? But again ; the force of examples is not confined to those alone that pass immediately under our sight : the examples that memory suggests have the same effect in their degree, and an habit of recalling them will soon produce the habit of imitating them. In the same epistle, from whence I cited a passage just now, SENECA

says

says that CLEANTHES had never become so perfect a copy of ZENO, if he had not passed his life with him ; that PLATO, ARISTOTLE, and the other philosophers of that school, profited more by the example, than by the discourse of SOCRATES. [ But here by the way SENECA mistook ; for SOCRATES died two years according to some, and four years according to others, before the birth of ARISTOTLE : and his mistake might come from the inaccuracy of those who collected for him ; as ERASMUS observes, after QUINTILIAN, in his judgment on SENECA. ] But be this, which was scarce worth a parenthesis, as it will ; he adds that METRODORUS, HERMACHUS, and POLYÆNUS, men of great note, were formed by living under the same roof with EPICURUS, not by frequenting his school. These are instances of the force of immediate example. But your lordship knows that the citizens of Rome placed the images of their ancestors in the vestibules of their houses ; so that whenever they went in or out, these venerable bustoes met their eyes, and recalled the glorious actions of the dead to fire the living, to excite them to imitate and even to emulate their great forefathers. The success answered the design. The virtue of one generation was transfused



transfused by the magic of example into several: and a spirit of heroism was maintained through many ages of that commonwealth. Now these are so many instances of the force of remote example, and from all these instances we may conclude that examples of both kinds are necessary.

THE school of example, my lord, is the world: and the masters of this school are history and experience. I am far from contending that the former is preferable to the latter. I think upon the whole otherwise: but this I say, that the former is absolutely necessary to prepare us for the latter, and to accompany us whilst we are under the discipline of the latter, that is, through the whole course of our lives. No doubt some few men may be quoted, to whom nature gave what art and industry can give to no man. But such examples will prove nothing against me, because I admit that the study of history without experience is insufficient, but assert that experience itself is so without genius. Genius is preferable to the other two, but I would wish to find the three together: for how great soever a genius may be, and how much soever he may acquire new light and heat as he proceeds in his rapid course, certain it is that he will never shine with the full

full lustre; nor shed the full influence he is capable of, unless to his own experience he adds the experience of other men and other ages. Genius, without the improvement at least of experience, is what comets once were thought to be, a blazing meteor, irregular in his course, and dangerous in his approach; of no use to any system, and able to destroy any. Mere sons of earth, if they have experience without any knowledge of the history of the world, are but half scholars in the science of mankind. And if they are conversant in history without experience, they are worse than ignorant; they are pedants, always incapable, sometimes meddling and presuming. The man, who has all three, is an honour to his country, and a public blessing: and such I trust your lordship will be in this century, as your great-grand-father \* was in the last.

I HAVE insisted a little the longer on this head, and have made these distinctions the rather, because tho I attribute a great deal more, than many will be ready to allow, to the study of history; yet I would not willingly even seem to fall into the ridicule of ascribing to it such extravagant effects, as several have done, from TULLY  
down

\* Earl of CLARENDON.

down to CASAUBON, LA MOTHE LE VAYER, and other modern pedants. When TULLY informs us in the second book of his Tusculan disputations, that the first SCIPIO AFRICANUS had always in his hands the works of XENOPHON, he advances nothing but what is probable and reasonable. To say nothing of the retreat of the ten thousand, nor of other parts of XENOPHON's writings; the images of virtue, represented in that admirable picture the Cyropædia, were proper to entertain a soul that was fraught with virtue, and CYRUS was worthy to be imitated by SCIPIO. So SELIM emulated CÆSAR, whose commentaries were translated for his use against the customs of the Turks: so CÆSAR emulated ALEXANDER, and ALEXANDER ACHILLES. There is nothing ridiculous here, except the use that is made of this passage by those who quote it. But what the same TULLY says in the fourth book of his academical disputations, concerning LUCULLUS, seems to me very extraordinary. "In Asiam factus imperator venit; cum  
" esset Româ profectus rei militaris rudis;" (one would be ready to ascribe so sudden a change, and so vast an improvement, to nothing less than knowledge infused by inspiration, if we were not assured in the same

same place that they were effected by very natural means, by such as it is in every man's power to employ) "partim percontando à peritis, partim in rebus gestis legendis." LUCULLUS, according to this account, verified the reproach on the Roman nobility, which SALUST puts into the mouth of MARIUS. But as I discover the passion of MARIUS, and his prejudices to the Patricians in one case; so I discover, methinks, the cunning of TULLY, and his partiality to himself in the other. LUCULLUS, after he had been chosen consul, obtained by intrigue the government of Cilicia, and so put himself into a situation of commanding the Roman army against MITHRIDATES: TULLY had the same government afterwards, and tho he had no MITHRIDATES nor any other enemy of consequence opposed to him, tho all his military feats consisted in surprizing and pillaging a parcel of highlanders and wild Cilicians, yet he assumed the airs of a conqueror, and described his actions in so pompous a stile, that the account becomes burlesque. He laughs indeed in one of his letters to ATTICUS at his generalship; but if we turn to those he writ to COELIUS RUFUS and to CATO upon this occasion, or to those wherein he expresses to ATTICUS his resentment  
against



against CATO, for not proposing in his favour the honors usually decreed to conquerors we may see how vanity turned his head, and how impudently he insisted on obtaining a triumph. Is it any strain now to suppose, that he meant to insinuate in the passage I have quoted about LUCULLUS, that the difference between him and the former governor of Cilicia, even in military merit, arose from the different conjuncture alone? and that LUCULLUS could not have done in Cilicia at that time more than he himself did? CICERO had read and questioned at least as much as LUCULLUS, and would therefore have appeared as great a captain, if he had had as great a prince as MITHRIDATES to encounter. But the truth is, that LUCULLUS was made a great captain by theory or study of history alone, no more than FERDINAND of Spain and ALPHONSUS of Naples were cured of desperate distempers by reading LIVY and QUINTUS CURTIUS; a silly tale which BODIN, AMYOT, and others have picked up and propagated. LUCULLUS had served in his youth against the Marfi, probably in other wars, and SYLLA took early notice of him: he went into the east with this general, and had a great share in his confidence.

fidence. He commanded in several expeditions. It was he who restored the Colophonians to their liberty, and who punished the revolt of the people of Mytilene. Thus we see that LUCULLUS was formed by experience as well as study, and by an experience gained in those very countries, where he gathered so many laurels afterwards in fighting against the same enemy. The late duke of MARLBOROUGH never read XENOPHON most certainly, nor the relation perhaps of any modern wars; but he served in his youth under monsieur de TURENNE, and I have heard that he was taken notice of in those early days by that great man. He afterwards commanded in an expedition to Ireland, served a campaign or two, if I mistake not, under king WILLIAM in Flanders: and, besides these occasions, had none of gaining experience in war, till he came to the head of our armies in one thousand seven hundred and two, and triumphed, not over Asiatic troops, but over the veteran armies of France. The Roman had on his side genius and experience cultivated by study: the Briton had genius improved by experience, and no more. The first therefore is not an example of what study can do alone; but the latter is an example of what genius and experience,

experience can do without study. They can do much to be sure, when the first is given in a superior degree. But such examples are very rare : and when they happen, it will be still true, that they would have had fewer blemishes, and would have come nearer to the perfection of private and public virtue, in all the arts of peace and achievements of war ; if the views of such men had been enlarged, and their sentiments ennobled, by acquiring that cast of thought and that temper of mind, which will grow up and become habitual in every man who applies himself early to the study of history as the study of philosophy, with the intention of being wiser and better, without the affectation of being more learned.

THE temper of the mind is formed, and a certain turn given to our ways 'of thinking ; in a word, the seeds of that moral character which cannot wholly alter the natural character, but may correct the evil and improve the good that is in it, or do the very contrary, or sow betimes, much sooner than is commonly supposed. It is equally certain, that we shall gather or not gather experience, be the better or the worse for this experience, when we come into the world and mingle  
amongst

among mankind according to the temper of mind and the turn of thought, that we have acquired beforehand, and bring along with us. They will tincture all our future acquisitions, so that the very same experience, which secures the judgment of one man or excites him to virtue, shall lead another into error, or plunge him into vice. From hence it follows, that the study of history has in this respect a double advantage. If experience alone can make us perfect in our parts, experience cannot begin to teach them till we are actually on the stage : whereas by a previous application to this study, we connect them over at least before we appear there : we are not quite unprepared, we learn our parts sooner, and we learn them better.

LET me explain what I mean by an example. There is scarce any folly or vice more epidemical among the sons of men, than that ridiculous and hurtful vanity, by which the people of each country are apt to prefer themselves to those of every other ; and to make their own customs and manners and opinions the standards of right and wrong, of true and false. The Chinese mandarins were strangely surprised, and almost incredulous, when the Jesuits shewed them how small a figure



gure their empire made in the general map of the world. The Samoides wondered much at the Czar of Muscovy for not living among them: and the Hottentott, who returned from Europe, stripped himself naked as soon as he came home, put on his bracelets of guts and garbage, and grew stinking and lowly as fast as he could. Now nothing can contribute more to prevent us from being tainted with this vanity, than to accustom ourselves early to contemplate the different nations of the earth in that vast map which history spreads before us, in their rise and their fall, in their barbarous and civilized states, in the likeness and unlikeness of them all to one another, and of each to itself. By frequently renewing this prospect to the mind, the Mexican with his cap and coat of feathers, sacrificing a human victim to his god, will not appear more savage to our eyes, than the Spaniard with an hat on his head, and a gonilla round his neck, sacrificing whole nations to his ambition, his avarice, and even the wantonness of his cruelty. I might shew, by a multitude of other examples, how history prepares us for experience, and guides us in it: and many of these would be both curious and important. I might likewise bring several other

other instances, wherein history serves to purge the mind of those national partialities and prejudices that we are apt to contract in our education, and that experience for the most part rather confirms than removes; because it is for the most part confined, like our education. But I apprehend growing too prolix, and shall therefore conclude this head by observing, that tho an early and proper application to the study of history will contribute extremely to keep our minds free from a ridiculous partiality in favour of our own country, and a vicious prejudice against others; yet the same study will create in us a preference of affection to our own country. There is a story told of **ABGARUS**. He brought several beasts taken in different places to Rome, they say, and let them loose before **AUGUSTUS**: every beast ran immediately to that part of the Circus, where a parcel of earth taken from his native soil had been laid. “*Credat Judaeus Apella*”. This tale might pass on **JOSEPHUS**; for in him I believe I read it: but surely the love of our country is a lesson of reason, not an institution of nature. Education and habit, obligation and interest, attach us to it, not instinct. It is however so necessary to be cultivated

cultivated and the prosperity of all societies, as well as the grandeur of some, depends upon it so much, that orators by their eloquence, and poets by their enthusiasm, have endeavoured to work up this precept of morality into a principle of passion. But the examples which we find in history, improved by the lively descriptions and the just applauses or censures of historians, will have a much better and more permanent effect than declamation, or song, or the dry ethics of mere philosophy. In fine, to converse with historians is to keep good company: many of them were excellent men, and those who were not such have taken care however to appear such in their writings. It must be therefore of great use to prepare ourselves by this conversation for that of the world; and to receive our first impressions, and to acquire our first habits, in a scene where images of virtue and vice are continually represented to us in the colors that belong properly to them, before we enter on another scene, where virtue and vice are too often confounded, and what belongs to one is ascribed to the other.

BESIDES the advantage of beginning our acquaintance with mankind sooner, and of bringing with us into the world, and the business of it, such a cast of thought

other instances, wherein history serves to purge the mind of those national partialities and prejudices that we are apt to contract in our education, and that experience for the most part rather confirms than removes; because it is for the most part confined, like our education. But I apprehend growing too prolix, and shall therefore conclude this head by observing, that tho an early and proper application to the study of history will contribute extremely to keep our minds free from a ridiculous partiality in favour of our own country, and a vicious prejudice against others; yet the same study will create in us a preference of affection to our own country. There is a story told of *ABGARUS*. He brought several beasts taken in different places to Rome, they say, and let them loose before *AUGUSTUS*: every beast ran immediately to that part of the Circus, where a parcel of earth taken from his native soil had been laid. “*Credat Judaeus Apella*”. This tale might pass on *JOSEPHUS*; for in him I believe I read it: but surely the love of our country is a lesson of reason, not an institution of nature. Education and habit, obligation and interest, attach us to it, not instinct. It is however so necessary to be cultivated



cultivated and the prosperity of all societies, as well as the grandeur of some, depends upon it so much, that orators by their eloquence, and poets by their enthusiasm, have endeavoured to work up this precept of morality into a principle of passion. But the examples which we find in history, improved by the lively descriptions and the just applauses or censures of historians, will have a much better and more permanent effect than declamation, or song, or the dry ethics of mere philosophy. In fine, to converse with historians is to keep good company: many of them were excellent men, and those who were not such have taken care however to appear such in their writings. It must be therefore of great use to prepare ourselves by this conversation for that of the world; and to receive our first impressions, and to acquire our first habits, in a scene where images of virtue and vice are continually represented to us in the colors that belong properly to them, before we enter on another scene, where virtue and vice are too often confounded, and what belongs to one is ascribed to the other.

BESIDES the advantage of beginning our acquaintance with mankind sooner, and of bringing with us into the world, and the business of it, such a cast of thought

and such a temper of mind, as will enable us to make a better use of our experience ; there is this farther advantage in the study of history, that the improvement we make by it extends to more objects, and is made at the expence of other men : whereas that improvement, which is the effect of our own experience, is confined to fewer objects, and is made at our own expence. To state the account fairly therefore between these two improvements ; tho' the latter be the more valuable, yet allowance being made on one side for the much greater number of examples that history presents to us, and deduction being made on the other of the price we often pay for our experience, the value of the former will rise in proportion, “ I have recorded these things, says POLYBIUS, after giving an account of the defeat of REGULUS “ that they who “ read these commentaries may be rendered better by them ; for all men have two “ ways of improvement, one arising from “ their own experience, and one from the “ experience of others.” “ Evidentior “ quidem illa est, quae per propria ducit “ infortunia ; at tutior illa quae per aliena.” I use CASAUBON's translation. POLYBIUS goes on, and concludes, “ that since “ the

“ the first of these ways exposes us to  
 “ great labor and peril, whilst the se-  
 “ cond works the same good effect, and  
 “ is attended by no evil circumstance,  
 “ every one ought to take for grant-  
 “ ed, that the study of history is the  
 “ best school where he can learn how to  
 “ conduct himself in all the situations of  
 “ life.” REGULUS had seen at Rome  
 many examples of magnanimity, of fru-  
 gality, of the contempt of riches and  
 of other virtues ; and these virtues he  
 practised. But he had not learned, nor  
 had opportunity of learning another lesson,  
 which the examples recorded in history  
 inculcate frequently, the lesson of mode-  
 ration. An insatiable thirst of military  
 fame, an unconfined ambition of extend-  
 ing their empire, an extravagant con-  
 fidence in their own courage and force,  
 an insolent contempt of their enemies, and  
 an impetuous over-bearing spirit with  
 which they pursued all their enterprizes,  
 composed in his days the distinguishing  
 character of a Roman. Whatever the  
 senate and people resolved, appeared to  
 the members of that commonwealth both  
 practicable and just. Neither difficulties  
 nor dangers could check them ; and their  
 sages had not yet discovered, that virtues

in excess degenerate into vices. Notwithstanding the beautiful rant which HORACE puts into his mouth, I make no doubt that REGULUS learned at Carthage those lessons of moderation which he had not learned at Rome : but he learned them by experience, and the fruits of this experience came too late, and cost too dear ; for they cost the total defeat of the Roman army, the prolongation of a calamitous war which might have been finished by a glorious peace, the loss of liberty to thousands of Roman citizens, and to REGULUS himself the loss of life in the midst of torments, if we are entirely to credit what is perhaps exaggeration in the Roman authors.

THERE is another advantage worthy our observation that belongs to the study of history ; and that I shall mention here, not only because of the importance of it, but because it leads me immediately to speak of the nature of the improvement we ought to have in our view, and of the method in which it seems to me that this improvement ought to be pursued : two particulars from which your lordship may think perhaps that I digress too long. The advantage I mean consists in this, that the examples which history



## Of the STUDY of HISTORY. 29

history presents to us, both of men and of events, are generally complete: the whole example is before us, and consequently the whole lesson, or sometimes the various lessons which philosophy proposes to teach us by this example. For first, as to men; we see them at their whole length in history, and we see them generally there through a medium less partial at least than that of experience: for I imagine, that a whig or a tory, whilst those parties subsisted, would have condemned in SATURNINUS the spirit of faction which he applauded in his own tribunes, and would have applauded in DRUSUS the spirit of moderation which he despised in those of the contrary party, and which he suspected and hated in those of his own party. The villain who has imposed on mankind by his power or cunning, and whom experience could not unmask for a time, is unmasked at length: and the honest man, who has been misunderstood or defamed, is justified before his story ends. Or if this does not happen, if the villain dies with his mask on, in the midst of applause and honor and wealth and power, and if the honest man dies under the same load of calumny and disgrace under which

he lived, driven perhaps into exile and exposed to want ; yet we see historical justice executed, the name of one branded with infamy, and that of the other celebrated with panygeric to succeeding ages. “ Praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes fileantur ; utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamiâ metus sit.” Thus according to **TACITUS**, and according to truth, from which his judgments seldom deviate, the principal duty of history is to erect a tribunal, like that among the Egyptians, mentioned by **DIODORUS SICULUS**, where men and princes themselves were tried, and condemned or acquitted, after their deaths : where those who had not been punished for their crimes, and those who had not been honored for their virtues, received a just retribution. The sentence is pronounced in one case, as it was in the other, too late to correct or recompence ; but it is pronounced in time to render these examples of general instruction to mankind. Thus **CICERO**, that I may quote one instance out of thousands, and that I may do justice to the general character of that great man whose particular failing I have censured so freely ; **CICERO**, I say, was abandoned by **OCTAVIUS**, and massacred

Of the STUDY of HISTORY. 31

cred by ANTHONY. But let any man read this fragment of ARELLIUS FUSCUS, and chuse which he would wish to have been, the orator, or the triumvir? “ Quoad  
“ humanum genus incolume manserit,  
“ quamdiu usus litteris, honor summae  
“ eloquentiae pretium erit, quamdiu rerum  
“ natura aut fortuna steterit, aut memoria  
“ duraverit, admirabile, posteris vigebris  
“ ingenium, et uno proscriptus seculo,  
“ proscribes Antonium omnibus.”

THUS again as to events that stand recorded in history : we see them all, we see them as they followed one another, or as they produced one another, causes or effects, immediate or remote. We are cast back, as it were, into former ages : we live with the men who lived before us, and we inhabit countries that we never saw. Place is enlarged, and time prolonged, in this manner ; so that the man who applies himself early to the study of history, may acquire in a few years, and before he sets his foot abroad in the world, not only a more extended knowledge of mankind, but the experience of more centuries than any of the patriarchs saw. The events we are witnesses of, in the course of the longest life, appear to us very often original, unprepared, single,  
C 4 and

and un-relative, if I may use such an expression for want of a better in English; in French I would say isoléz : they appear such very often, are called accidents, and looked upon as the effects of chance; a word, by the way, which is in constant use, and has no determinate meaning. We get over the present difficulty, we improve the momentary advantage, as well as we can, and we look no farther. Experience can carry us no farther; for experience can go a very little way back in discovering causes : and effects are not the objects of experience till they happen. From hence many errors in judgment, and by consequence in conduct, necessarily arise. And here too lyes the difference we are speaking of between history and experience. The advantage on the side of the former is double. In ancient history, as we have said already, the examples are complete, which are incomplete in the course of experience. The beginning, the progression, and the end appear, not of particular reigns, much less of particular enterprizes, or systems of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all the various systems that have succeeded one another in the course of their duration. In modern



modern history, the examples may be, and sometimes are, incomplete ; but they have this advantage when they are so, that they serve to render complete the examples of our own time. Experience is doubly defective ; we are born too late to see the beginning, and we die too soon to see the end of many things. History supplies both these defects. Modern history shews the causes, when experience presents the effects alone : and ancient history enables us to guess at the effects when experience presents the causes alone. Let me explain my meaning by two examples of these kinds ; one past, the other actually present.

WHEN the revolution of one thousand six hundred eighty eight happened, few men then alive, I suppose, went farther in their search after the causes of it, than the extravagant attempt of king JAMES against the religion and liberty of his people. His former conduct and the passages of king CHARLES II's reign might rankle still at the hearts of some men, but could not be set to account among the causes of his deposition ; since he had succeeded, notwithstanding them, peaceably to the throne, and the nation in general, even many of those who would have excluded him from

it, were desirous, or at least willing, that he should continue in it. Now this example thus stated affords, no doubt, much good instruction to the kings, and people of Britain. But this instruction is not entire, because the example thus stated, and confined to the experience of that age, is imperfect. King JAMES's mal-administration rendered a revolution necessary and practicable ; but his mal-administration, as well as all his preceding conduct, was caused by his bigot attachment to popery, and to the principles of arbitrary government, from which no warning could divert him. His bigot attachment to these was caused by the exile of the royal family ; this exile was caused by the usurpation of CROMWEL : and CROMWEL's usurpation was the effect of a former rebellion, begun not without reason on account of liberty, but without any valid pretence on account of religion. During this exile, our princes caught the taint of popery and foreign policies. We made them unfit to govern us, and after that were forced to recal them that they might rescue us out of anarchy. It was necessary therefore, your lordship sees, at the revolution, and it is more so now, to go back in history, at least as far as I have mentioned, and perhaps farther,

ther, even to the beginning of king JAMES the first's reign, to render this event a complete example, and to develope all the wise, honest, and salutary precepts, with which it is pregnant, both to king and subject.

THE other example shall be taken from what has succeeded the revolution. Few men at that time looked forward enough, to foresee the necessary consequences of the new constitution of the revenue that was soon afterwards formed, nor of the method of funding that immediately took place; which, absurd as they are, have continued ever since, till it is become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the creation of funds, and the multiplication of taxes, would encrease yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties, by a natural and necessary progression, into more real, tho less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution. The excessive ill husbandry practised from the very beginning of king WILLIAM's reign, and which laid the foundations of all we feel and all we fear, was not the effect of ignorance, mistake, or what we call chance, but of design and scheme in those who had the sway at that time. I am not so uncharitable however as to believe that they intended to bring  
upon

upon their country all the mischiefs that we, who came after them, experience, and apprehend. No, they saw the measures they took singly, and unrelatively, or relatively alone to some immediate object. The notion of attaching men to the new government, by tempting them to embark their fortunes on the same bottom, was a reason of state to some : the notion of creating a new, that is, a monied interest, in opposition to the landed interest or as a balance to it, and of acquiring a superior influence in the city of London at least by the establishment of great corporations, was a reason of party to others : and I make no doubt that the opportunity of amassing immense estates by the management of funds, by trafficking in paper, and by all the arts of jobbing, was a reason of private interest to those who supported and improved this scheme of iniquity, if not to those who devised it. They looked no farther. Nay we who came after them, and have long tasted the bitter fruits of the corruption they planted, were far from taking such an alarm at our distress, and our danger, as they deserved ; till the most remote and fatal effect of causes, laid by the last generation, was very near becoming an object  
of



of experience in this. Your lordship, I am sure, sees at once how much a due reflection on the passages of former times, as they stand recorded in the history of our own, and of other countries, would have deterred a free people from trusting the sole management of so great a revenue, and the sole nomination of those legions of officers employed in it, to their chief magistrate. There remained indeed no pretence for doing so, when once a salary was settled on the prince, and the public revenue was no longer in any sense his revenue, nor the public expence his expence. Give me leave to add, that it would have been and would be still, more decent with regard to the prince, and less repugnant if not more conformable to the principles and practice too of our government, to take this power and influence from the prince, or to share it with him; than to exclude men from the privilege of representing their fellow subjects who would chuse them in parliament, purely because they are employed and trusted by the prince.

YOUR lordship sees not only, how much a due reflection upon the experience of other ages and countries would have pointed out national corruption as the natural

tural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so great a revenue, but also the loss of liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption.

These two examples explain sufficiently what they are intended to explain. It only remains therefore upon this head, to observe the difference between the two manners in which history supplies the defects of our own experience. It shews us causes as in fact they were laid, with their immediate effects : and it enables us to guess at future events. It can do no more in the nature of things. My lord BACON, in his second book of the advancement of learning, having in his mind I suppose what PHILO and JOSEPHUS asserted of MOSES, affirms divine history to have this prerogative, that the narration may be before the fact as well as after. But since the ages of prophecy, as well as miracles, are past, we must content ourselves to guess at what will be, by what has been : we have no other means in our power, and history furnishes us with these. How we are to improve, and apply these means, as well as how we are to acquire them, shall be deduced more particularly in another letter.

OF THE

# STUDY of HISTORY.

## LETTER III.

1. An objection against the utility of history removed.
2. The false and true aims of those who study it.
3. Of the history of the first ages, with reflections on the state of ancient history profane and sacred.

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**W**ERE these letters to fall into the hands of some ingenious persons who adorn the age we live in, your lordship's correspondent would be joked upon for his project of improving men in virtue and wisdom by the study of history. The general characters of men, it would be said, are determined by their natural constitutions, as their particular actions are by immediate objects. Many very conversant in history would be cited,  
 who

who have proved ill men, or bad politicians ; and a long roll would be produced of others who have arrived at a great pitch of private, and public virtue, without any assistance of this kind. Something has been said already to anticipate this objection ; but since I have heard several persons affirm such propositions with great confidence, a loud laugh, or a silent sneer at the pedants who presumed to think otherwise ; I will spend a few paragraphs, with your lordship's leave, to shew that such affirmations (for to affirm amongst these fine men is to reason) either prove too much, or prove nothing.

If our general characters were determined absolutely, as they are certainly influenced, by our constitutions, and if our particular actions were so by immediate objects ; all instruction by precept as well as example, and all endeavours to form the moral character by education, would be unnecessary. Even the little care that is taken, and surely it is impossible to take less, in the training up our youth, would be too much. But the truth is widely different from this representation of it ; for what is vice, and what is virtue ? I speak of them in a large and philosophical sense.

The



The former is, I think, no more than the excess, abuse, and misapplication of appetites, desires, and passions, natural and innocent, nay useful and necessary. The latter consists in the moderation and government, in the use and application of these appetites, desires, and passions, according to the rules of reason, and therefore often in opposition to their own blind impulse.

What now is education? that part, that principal and most neglected part of it, I mean, which tends to form the moral character? It is, I think, an institution designed to lead men from their tender years, by precept and example, by argument and authority, to the practice and to the habit of practising these rules. The stronger our appetites, desires, and passions are, the harder indeed is the task of education: but when the efforts of education are proportioned to this strength, altho' our keenest appetites and desires, and our ruling passions cannot be reduced to a quiet and uniform submission, yet are not their excesses asswaged? are not their abuses and misapplications, in some degree, diverted or checked? Tho the pilot cannot lay the storm, cannot he carry the ship by his art better through it,

it, and often prevent the wreck that would always happen without him? If ALEXANDER, who loved wine, and was naturally choleric, had been bred under the severity of Roman discipline, it is probable he would neither have made a bonfire of Persepolis for his whore, nor have killed his friend. If SCIPIO, who was naturally given to women, for which anecdote we have, if I mistake not, the authority of POLYBIUS, as well as some verses of NAEVIUS preserved by A. GELLIUS, had been educated by OLYMPIAS at the court of PHILIP, it is improbable that he would have restored the beautiful Spaniard. In short, if the renowned SOCRATES had not corrected nature by art, this first apostle of the gentiles had been a very profligate fellow by his own confession; for he was inclined to all the vices ZOPYRUS imputed to him, as they say, on the observation of his physiognomy.

With him therefore, who denies the effects of education, it would be in vain to dispute; and with him who admits them, there can be no dispute, concerning that share which I ascribe to the study of history, in forming our moral characters, and making us better men. The very persons who pretend that inclinations cannot be restrained,

strained, nor habits corrected, against our natural bent, would be the first perhaps to prove in certain cases the contrary. A fortune at court, or the favours of a lady, have prevailed on many to conceal, and they could not conceal without restraining, which is one step towards correcting, the vices they were by nature addicted to the most. Shall we imagine now, that the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, the charms of a bright and lasting reputation, the terror of being delivered over as criminals to all posterity, the real benefit arising from a conscientious discharge of the duty we owe to others, which benefit fortune can neither hinder nor take away, and the reasonableness of conforming ourselves to the designs of God manifested in the constitution of the human nature; shall we imagine, I say, that all these are not able to acquire the same power over those who are continually called upon to a contemplation of them, and they who apply themselves to the study of history are so called upon, as other motives, mean and sordid in comparison of these, can usurp on other men?

2. THAT the study of history, far from making us wiser, and more useful citizens, as well as better men, may be of no advantage

vantage whatsoever ; that it may serve to render us mere antiquaries and scholars, or that it may help to make us forward coxcombs, and prating pedants, I have already allowed. But this is not the fault of history : and to convince us that it is not, we need only contrast the true use of history with the use that is made of it by such men as these. We ought always to keep in mind, that history is philosophy, teaching by examples how to conduct ourselves in all the situations of private and public life ; that therefore we must apply ourselves to it in a philosophical spirit and manner ; that we must rise from particular to general knowledge, and that we must fit ourselves for the society and business of mankind by accustoming our minds to reflect and meditate, on the characters we find described, and the course of events we find related there. Particular examples may be of use sometimes in particular cases ; but the application of them is dangerous. It must be done with the utmost circumspection, or it will be seldom done with success. And yet one would think that this was the principal use of the study of history, by what has been written on the subject. I know not whether MACHIAVEL himself is quite free from defect  
on



on this account: he seems to carry the use and application of particular examples sometimes too far. **MARIUS** and **CATULUS** passed the Alpes, met, and defeated the Cimbri beyond the frontiers of Italy. Is it safe to conclude from hence, that whenever one people is invaded by another, the invaded ought to meet and fight the invaders at a distance from their frontiers? **MACHIAVEL**'s countryman, **GUICCIARDIN**, was aware of the danger that might arise from such an application of examples. **PETER** of Medicis had involved himself in great difficulties, when those wars and calamities 'began which **LEWIS SFORZA** first drew and entailed on Italy, by flattering the ambition of **CHARLES** the eighth in order to gratify his own, and calling the French into that country. **PETER** owed his distress to his folly in departing from the general tenor of conduct his father **LAURENCE** had held, and hoped to relieve himself by imitating his father's example in one particular instance. At a time when the wars with the pope and king of Naples had reduced **LAURENCE** to circumstances of great danger, he took the resolution of going to **FERDINAND**, and of treating in person with that prince. The resolution appears in history imprudent  
and

and almost desperate : were we informed of the secret reasons on which this great man acted, it would appear very possibly a wise and safe measure. It succeeded, and LAURENCE brought back with him public peace, and private security. As soon as the French troops entered the dominions of Florence, PETER was struck with a panic terror, went to CHARLES the eighth, put the port of Leghorn, the fortresses of Pisa, and all the keys of the country into this prince's hands ; whereby he disarmed the Florentine common-wealth, and ruined himself. He was deprived of his authority, and driven out of the city, by the just indignation of the magistrates, and people : and in the treaty which they made afterwards with the king of France it was stipulated, that PETER should not remain within an hundred miles of the state, nor his brothers within the same distance of the city of Florence. On this occasion GUICCIARDIN observes, how dangerous it is to govern ourselves by particular examples ; since, to have the same success, we must have the same prudence, and the same fortune ; and since the example must not only answer the case before us in general, but in every minute circumstance. This is the sense of that admirable

ble historian, and these are his words.—

“ é senza dubbio molto pericoloso il go-  
 “ vernarsi con gl’ esempi, se non conco-  
 “ rono, non solo in generale, ma in tutti  
 “ i particolari, le medesime ragioni ; se  
 “ le cose non sono regolate con la mede-  
 “ sima prudenza, & se oltre a tutti li al-  
 “ tri fondamenti, non v’ha la parte sua la  
 “ medesima fortuna.” An observation  
 that BOILEAU makes, and a rule he lays  
 down in speaking of translations, will pro-  
 perly find their place here, and serve to  
 explain still better what I would establish.  
 “ To translate servilely into modern lan-  
 “ guage an ancient author phrase by phrase.  
 “ and word by word, is preposterous :  
 “ nothing can be more unlike the original  
 “ than such a copy. It is not to shew, it  
 “ is to disguise the author : and he who  
 “ has known him only in this dress, would  
 “ not know him in his own. A good  
 “ writer, instead of taking this inglorious  
 “ and unprofitable task upon him, will  
 “ jouster contre l’original, rather imitate  
 “ than translate, and rather emulate than  
 “ imitate : he will transfuse the sense and  
 “ spirit of the original into his own work,  
 “ and will endeavour to write as the an-  
 “ cient author would have wrote, had he  
 “ writ in the same language.” Now, to  
 improve

NB

improve by examples is to improve by imitation. We must catch the spirit, if we can, and conform ourselves to the reason of them; but we must not affect to translate servilely into our conduct, if your lordship will allow me the expression, the particular conduct of those good and great men, whose images history sets before us. **CONRUS** and the **DECI** devoted themselves to death: one, because an oracle had foretold that the army whose general was killed would be victorious; the others in compliance with a superstition that bore great analogy to a ceremony practised in the old Egyptian church, and added afterwards, as many others of the same origin were, to the ritual of the Israelites. These are examples of great magnanimity to be sure, and of magnanimity employed in the most worthy cause. In the early days of the Athenian and Roman government, when the credit of oracles and all kinds of superstition prevailed, when heaven was piously thought to delight in blood, and even human blood was shed under wild notions of atonement, propitiation, purification, expiation, and satisfaction; they who set such examples as these acted an heroic and a rational part too. But if a general should act the same part now, and,  
in



in order to secure his victory, get killed as fast as he could ; he might pass for an hero, but I am sure he would pass for a madman. Even these examples however are of use : they excite us at least to venture our lives freely in the service of our country ; by proposing to our imitation men who devoted themselves to certain death in the service of theirs. They shew us what a turn of imagination can operate, and how the greatest trifle, nay the greatest absurdity, dressed up in the solemn airs of religion, can carry ardor and confidence, or the contrary sentiments, into the breasts of thousands.

THERE are certain general principles, and rules of life and conduct, which always must be true, because they are conformable to the invariable nature of things. He who studies history as he would study philosophy will soon distinguish and collect them, and by doing so will soon form to himself a general system of ethics and politics on the surest foundations, on the trial of these principles and rules in all ages, and on the confirmation of them by universal experience. I said he will distinguish them ; for once more I must say, that as to particular modes of actions, and measures of

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conduct, which the customs of different countries, the manners of different ages, and the circumstances of different conjunctures, have appropriated, as it were, it is always ridiculous, or imprudent and dangerous, to employ them. But this is not all. By contemplating the vast variety of particular characters and events; by examining the strange combinations of causes, different, remote, and seemingly opposite, that often concur in producing one effect; and the surprising fertility of one single and uniform cause in the producing of a multitude of effects as different, as remote, and seemingly as opposite; by tracing carefully, as carefully as if the subject he considers were of personal and immediate concern to him, all the minute and sometimes scarce-perceivable circumstances, either in the characters of actors, or in the course of actions, that history enables him to trace, and according to which the success of affairs, even the greatest, is mostly determined; by these, and such methods as these, for I might descend into a much greater detail, a man of parts may improve the study of history to it's proper and principal use; he may sharpen the penetration, fix the attention of his mind, and strengthen his judgment; he may acquire the faculty and the habit of discerning

discerning quicker, and looking farther ; and of exerting that flexibility, and steadiness, which are necessary to be joined in the conduct of all affairs that depend on the concurrence or opposition of other men.

Mr. LOCKE, I think, recommends the study of geometry even to those who have no design of being geometricians ; and he gives a reason for it, that may be applied to the present case. Such persons may forget every problem that has been proposed, and every solution that they or others have given ; but the habit of pursuing long trains of ideas will remain with them, and they will pierce through the mazes of sophism and discover a latent truth, where persons who have not this habit will never find it.

In this manner the study of history will prepare us for action and observation.

History is the ancient author : experience is the modern language. We form our taste on the first ; we translate the sense and reason, we transfuse the spirit and force : but we imitate only the particular graces of the original ; we imitate them according to the idiom of our own tongue, that is we substitute often equivalents in the lieu of them, and are far from affecting to co-

py them servilely. To conclude, as experience is conversant about the present, and the present enables us to guess at the future ; so history is conversant about the past, and by knowing the things that have been, we become better able to judge of the things that are.

THIS use, my lord, which I make the proper and principal use of the study of history, is not insisted on by those who have writ concerning the method to be followed in his study : and since we propose different ends, we must of course take different ways. Few of their treatises have fallen into my hands : one, the method of BODIN, a man famous in his time, I remember to have read. I took it up with much expectation many years ago ; I went through it, and remained extremely disappointed. He might have given almost any other title to his book as properly as that which stands before it. There are not many pages in it that relate any more to his subject than a tedious fifth chapter, wherein he accounts for the characters of nations according to their positions on the globe, and according to the influence of the stars ; and assures his reader that nothing can be more necessary than such a disquisition, “ ad universam historiarum cognitionem, & incorruptum



“ruptum earum iudicium.” In his method, we are to take first a general view of universal history, and chronology, in short abstracts, and then to study all particular histories and systems. **SENECA** speaks of men who spend their whole lives in learning how to act in life, “dum vitae instrumenta conquirunt.” I doubt that this method of **BODIN** would conduct us in the same, or as bad a way; would leave us no time for action, or would make us unfit for it. A huge common-place book, wherein all the remarkable sayings and facts that we find in history are to be registred, may enable a man to talk or write like **BODIN**, but will never make him a better man, nor enable him to promote, like an useful citizen, the security, the peace, the welfare, or the grandeur of the community to which he belongs. I shall proceed therefore to speak of a method that leads to such purposes as these directly and certainly, without any regard to the methods that have been prescribed by others.

**I THINK** then we must be on our guard against this very affectation of learning, and this very wantonness of curiosity, which the examples and precepts we commonly meet with are calculated to flatter and indulge. We must neither dwell too long

in the dark, nor wander about till we lose our way in the light. We are too apt to carry systems of philosophy beyond all our ideas, and systems of history beyond all our memorials. The philosopher begins with reason, and ends with imagination. The historian inverts this order: he begins without memorials and he sometimes ends with them. This silly custom is so prevalent among men of letters who apply themselves to the study of history, and has so much prejudice and so much authority on the side of it, that your lordship must give me leave to speak a little more particularly and plainly than I have done, in favour of common sense, against an absurdity which is almost sanctified.

### REFLECTIONS

#### On the State of ancient History.

THE nature of man, and the constant course of human affairs, render it impossible that the first ages of any new nation which forms itself should afford authentic materials for history. We have none such concerning the originals of any of those nations that actually subsist. Shall we expect to find them concerning the originals of nations

nations dispersed, or extinguished, two or three thousand years ago? If a thread of dark and uncertain traditions, therefore, is made, as it commonly is, the introduction to history, we should touch it lightly, and run swiftly over it, far from insisting on it either as authors or readers. Such introductions are at best no more than fanciful preludes, that try the instruments, and precede the concert. He must be void of judgment, and taste, one would think, who can take the first for true history, or the last for true harmony. And yet so it has been and so it is, not in Germany and Holland alone; but in Italy, in France and in England, where genius has abounded, and taste has been long refined. Our great scholars have dealt and deal in fables at least as much as our poets, with this difference to the disadvantage of the former, to whom I may apply the remark as justly as SENECA applied it to the dialecticians—"tristius inepti sunt. Illi ex professo lascivunt; hi agere seipsos aliquid existimant." Learned men, in learned and inquisitive ages, who possessed many advantages that we have not, and among others that of being placed so many centuries nearer the original truths that are the objects of so much laborious search, despaired of find-



ing them, and gave fair warning to posterity, if posterity would have taken it. The ancient geographers, as PLUTARCH says in the life of THESEUS, when they laid down in their maps the little extent of sea and land that was known to them, left great spaces void. In some of these spaces they wrote, here are sandy deserts, in others, here are impassible marshes, here is a chain of inhospitable mountains, or here is a frozen ocean. Just so both he and other historians, when they related fabulous originals, were not wanting to set out the bounds beyond which there was neither history nor chronology. CENSORINUS has preserved the distinction of three aeras established by VARRO. This learned Roman antiquary did not determine whether the first period had any beginning, but fixed the end of it at the first, that is, according to him, the Ogygian, deluge; which he placed I think some centuries backward than JULIUS AFRICANUS thought fit to place it afterwards. To this aera of absolute darkness he supposed that a kind of twilight succeeded, from the Ogygian deluge to the Olympic aera, and this he called the fabulous age. From this vulgar aera when CORAEBUS was crowned victor, and long after the true aera when these games were



were instituted by **IPHITUS**, the Greeks pretend to be able to digest their history with some order, clearness, and certainty: **VARRO** therefore looked on it as the break of day, or the beginning of the historical age. He might do so the rather perhaps, because he included by it the date he likewise fixed, on, upon recollection, that the elder **CATO** had fixed, of the foundation of Rome within the period from which he supposed that historical truth was to be found. But yet most certain it is, that the history and chronology of the ages that follow are as confused and uncertain, as the history and chronology of those which immediately precede this æra.

I. The state of ancient profane history.

**THE** Greeks did not begin to write in prose till **PHERECIDES** of Syros introduced the custom; and **CADMUS MILESIUS** was their first historian. Now these men flourished long after the true, or even the vulgar Olympic æra; for **JOSEPHUS** affirms, and in this he has great probability on his side, that **CADMUS MILESIUS**, and **ACUSILAUS ARGIVUS**, in a word the oldest historians in Greece, were very little more ancient than the expedition of

the Persians against the Greeks. As several centuries passed between the Olympic æra and these first historians, there passed likewise several more between these and the first Greek chronologers. TIMOEUS about the time of PTOLOMY PHILADELPHUS, and ERATOSTHENES about that of PTOLOMY EVERGETES, seem first to have digested the events recorded by them according to the olympiads. Precedent writers mentioned sometimes the olympiads; but this rule of reckoning was not brought into established use sooner. The rule could not serve to render history more clear and certain till it was followed: it was not followed till about five hundred years after the Olympic æra. There remains therefore no pretence to place the beginning of the historical age so high, as VARRO placed it, by five hundred years.

HELLANICUS indeed and others pretended to give the originals of cities and governments, and to deduce their narrations from great antiquity. Their works are lost, but we can judge how inconsiderable the loss is, by the writings of that age which remain, and by the report of those who had seen the others. For instance, HERODOTUS was cotemporary with HELLANICUS. HERODOTUS was inquisi-  
tive

tive enough in all conscience, and proposed to publish all he could learn of the antiquities of the Ionians, Lydians, Phrygians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians ; that is of almost all the nations who were known in his time to exist. If he wrote Assyriacs, we have them not ; but we are sure that this word was used proverbially to signify fabulous legends, soon after his time, and when the mode of publishing such relations and histories prevailed among the Greeks.

IN the nine books we have, he goes back indeed almost to the Olympic aera, without taking notice of it however : but he goes back only to tell an old woman's tale, of a king who lost his crown for shewing his wife naked to his favourite, and from CANDAULES and GYGES he hastens or rather he takes a great leap, down to CYRUS.

SOMETHING like a thread of history of the Medes and then of the Persians, to the flight of XERXES, which happened in his own time, is carried on. The events of his own time are related with an air of history. But all accounts of the Greeks as well as the Persians, which precede these, and all the accounts which he gives occasionally of other nations, were drawn  
up

up most manifestly on broken, perplexed, and doubtful scraps of tradition. He had neither original records, nor any authentic memorials to guide him, and yet these are the sole foundations of true history. **HERODOTUS** flourished, I think, little more than half a century, and **XENOPHON** little more than a whole century, after the death of **CYRUS** : and yet how various and repugnant are the relations made by these two historians, of the birth, life, and death of this prince ? If more histories had come down from these ages to ours, the uncertainty and inutility of them all would be but the more manifest. We should find that **ACUSILAUS** rejected the traditions of **HESIOD**, that **HELLANIUS** contradicted **ACUSILAUS**, that **EPHORUS** accused **HELLANICUS**, that **TIMAEUS** accused **EPHORUS**, and all posterior writers **TIMAEUS**. This is the report of **JOSEPHUS**. But in order to shew the ignorance and falshood of all those writers through whom the traditions of profane antiquity came to the Greeks, I will quote to your lordship, a much better authority than that of **JOSEPHUS** ; the authority of one who had no prejudice to byass him, no particular cause to defend, nor system of ancient history to establish, and all the helps as well as talents



lents necessary to make him a competent judge. The man I mean is STRABO has

SPEAKING of the Massagetae in his eleventh book, he writes to this effect: that no author had given a true account of them, tho several had writ of the war that CYRUS waged against them; and that historians had found as little credit in what they had related concerning the affairs of the Persians, Medes, and Syrians. That this was due to their folly: for observing that those who wrote fables professedly were held in esteem, these men imagined they should render their writings more agreeable, if under the appearance and pretence of true history they related what they had neither seen nor heard from persons able to give them true information; and that accordingly their only aim had been to dress up pleasing and marvellous relations: that one may better give credit to HESIOD and HOMER, when they talk of their heroes, nay even to dramatic poets, than to CTESIAS, HERODOTUS, HELLANICUS, and their followers: that it is not safe to give credit even to the greatest part of the historians, who writ concerning ALEXANDER; since they too, encouraged by the greater reputation of this conqueror, by the distance to which he carried his arms, and by the difficulty  
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of disproving what they said of actions performed in regions so remote, were apt to deceive : that indeed when the Roman empire on one side, and the Parthian on the other, came to extend themselves, the truth of things came to be better known.

You see, my lord, not only how late profane history began to be writ by the Greeks, but how much later it began to be writ with any regard to truth : and consequently what wretched materials the learned men who arose, after the age of ALEXANDER, had to employ, when they attempted to form systems of ancient history and chronology. We have some remains of that laborious compiler DIODORUS SICULUS, but do we find in him any thread of ancient history, I mean that which passed for ancient in his time ? what complaints on the contrary does he not make of former historians ? how frankly does he confess the little and uncertain light he had to follow in his researches ? Yet DIODORUS, as well as PLUTARCH and others, had not only the older Greek historians, but the more modern antiquaries, who pretended to have searched into the records and registers of nations, even at that time renowned for their antiquity.

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**BEROSUS** for instance and **MANETHO**, one a Babylonian and the other an Egyptian priest, had published the antiquities of their countries in the time of the **PTOLOMYS**. **BEROSUS** pretended to give the history of four hundred eighty years. **PLINY**, if I remember right, for I say this on memory, speaks to this effect in the sixth book of his natural history : and if it was so, these years were probably years of **NABONASSAR**. **MANETHO** began his history, **GOD** knows when, from the progress of **ISIS**, or some other as well ascertained period. He followed the Egyptian traditions of dynasties of Gods and Demi-Gods ; and derived his anecdotes from the first **MERCURY**, who had inscribed them in sacred characters, on antediluvian pillars, antediluvian at least according to our received chronology, from which the second **MERCURY** had transcribed them, and inserted them into his works. We have not these antiquities ; for the monk of Viterbo was soon detected : and if we had them, they would either add to our uncertainty, and encrease the chaos of learning, or tell us nothing worth our knowledge. For thus I reason. Had they given particular and historical accounts conformable to the scriptures of the Jews ; **JOSSEPHUS**, **JULIUS AFRICANUS**, and **EUSEBIUS**

SEBIUS would have made quite other extracts from their writings, and would have altered and contradicted them less. The accounts they gave therefore were repugnant to sacred writ, or they were defective: they would have established Pyrrhonism, or have baulked our curiosity.

## 2. Of sacred history.

WHAT memorials therefore remain to give us light into the originals of ancient nations, and the history of those ages, we commonly call the first ages? The Bible it will be said: that is the historical part of it in the old testament. But, my lord, even these divine books must be reputed insufficient to the purpose, by every candid and impartial man, who considers either their authority as histories, or the matter they contain. For what are they? and how came they to us? At the time when ALEXANDER carried his arms into Asia, a people of Syria, till then unknown, became known to the Greeks: this people had been slaves to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, as these several empires prevailed: ten parts in twelve of them had been transplanted by ancient conquerors, and melted down and lost in the east,



east, several ages before the establishment of the empire that ALEXANDER destroyed: the other two parts had been carried captive to Babylon a little before the same aera. This captivity was not indeed perpetual like the other; but it lasted so long, and such circumstances, whatever they were, accompanied it, that the captives forgot their country, and even their language, the Hebrew dialect at least and character: and a few of them only could be wrought upon, by the zeal of some particular men, to return home, when the indulgence of the Persian monarchs gave them leave to rebuild their city and to repeople their ancient patrimony. Even this remnant of the nation did not continue long entire. Another great transmigration followed, and the Jews that settled under the protection of the PTOLOMYS forgot their language in Egypt, as the forefathers of these Jews had forgot theirs in Chaldea. More attached however to their religion in Egypt, for reasons easy to be deduced from the new institutions that prevailed after the captivity among them, than their ancestors had been in Chaldea, a version of their sacred writings was made into Greek at Alexandria, not long after the canon of these scriptures had been finished at Jerusalem; for many years

years could not intervene between the death of **SIMON** the just, by whom this canon was finished, if he died during the reign of **PTOLOMY SOTER**, and the beginning of this famous translation under **PTOLOMY PHILADELPHUS**. The Hellenist Jews reported as many marvellous things to authorize, and even to sanctify this translation, as the other Jews had reported about **ESDRAS** who began, and **SIMON** the just who finished, the canon of their Scriptures. These holy romances slid into tradition, and tradition became history: the fathers of our christian church did not disdain to employ them. **St. JEROME**, for instance, laughed at the story of the seventy two elders, whose translations were found to be, upon comparison, word for word the same tho made separately and by men who had no communication with one another. But the same **St. JEROME**, in the same place, quotes **ARISTEAS**, one of the guard of **PTOLOMY PHILADELPHUS** as a real personage.

THE account pretended to be writ by this **ARISTEAS** of all that passed relating to the translation, was enough for his purpose. This he retained, and he rejected only the more improbable circumstances, which had been added to the tale, and which laid it open

open to most suspicion. In this he shewed great prudence, and better judgment, than that zealous but weak apologist JES-  
TIN, who believed the whole story him-  
self, and endeavoured to impose it on  
mankind.

Thus you see, my lord, that when we  
consider these books barely as histories,  
delivered to us on the faith of a superstiti-  
ous people, among whom the custom and  
art of pious lying prevailed remarkably,  
we may be allowed to doubt whether great-  
er credit is to be given to what they tell us  
concerning the original, compiled in their  
own country and as it were out of the sight  
of the rest of the world; than we know,  
with such a certainty as no scholar pre-  
sumes to deny, that we ought to give to  
what they tell us concerning the copy.

THE Hellenist Jews were extremely  
pleased, no doubt, to have their scriptures  
in a language they understood, and that  
might spread the fame of their antiquity,  
and do honour to their nation among their  
masters the Greeks. But yet we do not  
find that the authority of these books pre-  
vailed; or that even they were much known  
among the Pagan world. The reason of  
this cannot be, that the Greeks admired no-  
thing that was not of their own growth,

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“sua tantum mirantur :” for on the contrary they were inquisitive and credulous in the highest degree, and they collected and published at least as many idle traditions of other nations, as they propagated of their own. JOSEPHUS pretended that THEOPOMPUS, a disciple of ISOCRATES, being about to insert in his history some things he had taken out of holy writ, the poor man became troubled in mind for several days, and that having prayed to God, during an intermission of his illness, to reveal to him the cause of it, he learned in his sleep that this attempt was the cause ; upon which he quitted the design and was cured. If JOSEPHUS had been a little more consistent than he is very often, such a story as this would not have been told, by one who was fond, as Jews and Christians in general have been, to create an opinion that the Gentiles took not their history alone, but their philosophy and all their valuable knowledge, from the Jews. Notwithstanding this story therefore which is told in the fifteenth book of the Jewish antiquities, and means nothing, or means to shew that the divine providence would not suffer anecdotes of sacred to be mingled with profane history ; the practice of JOSEPHUS himself, and of all those who have had



had the same design in view, has been to confirm the former by the latter, and at any rate to suppose an appearance at least of conformity between them. We are told HECATAEUS ABDERITA, for there were two of that name, writ a history favourable to the Jews: and not to multiply instances though I might easily do it, even ALEXANDER POLYHISTOR is called in. He is quoted by JOSEPHUS, and praised by EUSEBIUS as a man of parts and great variety of learning. His testimony, about the deluge and tower of Babel, is produced by St. CYRIL in his first book against JULIAN: and JUSTIN the apologist and martyr, in his exhortation to the Greeks, makes use of the same authority, among those that mention MOSES as a leader and prince of the Jews. Tho' this POLYHISTOR, if I remember right what I think I have met with in SUIDAS, spoke only of a woman he called Moso, "cujus scriptum sit lex hebraeorum". Had the Greek historians been conformable to the sacred, I cannot see that their authority, which was not cotemporary, would have been of any weight. They might have copied MOSES, and so they did CTESIAS. But even this was not the case: whatever use a particular writer here and there might make occasionally of the

the scriptures, certain it is that the Jews continued to be as much despised and their history to be as generally neglected, nay almost as generally unknown, for a long time at least after the version was made at Alexandria, as they had been before. APION an Egyptian, a man of much erudition, appeared in the world some centuries afterwards. He wrote, among other antiquities, those of his own country : and as he was obliged to speak very often of the Jews, he spoke of them in a manner neither much to their honor nor to that of their histories. He wrote purposely against them : and JOSEPHUS attempted afterwards, but APION was then dead, to confute him. APION passed, I know, for a vain and noisy pedant ; but he passed likewise for a curious, a laborious, and a learned antiquary. If he was cabalistical or superstitious, JOSEPHUS was at least as much so as he : and if he flattered CALIGULA, JOSEPHUS introduced himself to the court of NERO and the favour of POPPAEA, by no very honorable means, under the protection of ALITURUS, a player, and a Jew ; to say nothing of his applying to VESPASIAN the prophecies concerning the Messiah, nor of his accompanying TITUS to the siege of Jerusalem.

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IN short, my lord, the Jewish history never obtained any credit in the world, till christianity was established. The foundations of this system being laid partly in these histories, and in the prophecies joined to them or inserted in them, christianity has reflected back upon them an authority which they had not before, and this authority has prevailed wherever christianity has spread. Both Jews and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, whilst each condemns the other for not understanding, or for abusing them. But I apprehend that the zeal of both has done much hurt, by endeavouring to extend their authority much farther than is necessary for the support perhaps of Judaism, but to be sure of christianity. I explain myself that I may offend no pious ear.

SIMON, in the preface to his critical history of the old testament, cites a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the inspirations of the authors of those books which the church receives as the word of God, should be extended no farther than to matters purely of doctrine, or to such as have a near and necessary relation to these; and that whenever these authors writ on other subjects, such as Egyptian, Assyrian, or other history, they had no  
more

more of the divine assistance than any other persons of piety. This notion of inspirations that came occasionally, that illuminated the minds and guided the hands of the sacred pen-men while they were writing one page, and restrained their influence while the same authors were writing another, may be cavilled against: and what is there that may not? But surely it deserves to be treated with respect, since it tends to establish a distinction between the legal, doctrinal, or prophetical parts of the bible, and the historical: without which distinction it is impossible to establish the first, as evidently and as solidly as the interests of religion require: at least it appears impossible to me, after having examined and considered, as well as I am able, all the trials of this kind that have been made by subtle as well as learned men. The old is said to be the foundation of the new, and so it is in one sense: the system of religion contained in the latter refers to the system of religion contained in the former, and supposes the truth of it. But the authority on which we receive the books of the new testament is so far from being founded on the authority of the old testament, that it is quite independent on it: the new being proved, gives authority to  
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the old, but borrows none from it ; and gives this authority to the particular parts only. Christ came to fulfill the prophecies ; but not to consecrate all the written, any more than the oral, traditions of the Jews. We must believe these traditions as far as they relate to christianity, as far as christianity refers to them, or supposes them necessary ; but we can be under no obligation to believe them any farther, since without christianity we should be under no obligation to believe them at all.

It has been said by ABBADIE, and others, “ That the accidents which have “ happened to alter the texts of the bible, “ and to disfigure, if I may say so, the “ scriptures in many respects, could not “ have been prevented without a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpetual standing miracle is not in the order “ of providence.” Now I can by no means subscribe to this opinion. It seems evident to my reason that the very contrary must be true ; if we suppose that God acts towards men according to the moral fitness of things : and if we suppose that he acts arbitrarily, we can form no opinion at all. I think that these accidents would not have happened, or that the scriptures would have been preserved entirely in their genuine pu-

rity notwithstanding these accidents, if they had been entirely dictated by the Holy Ghost : and the proof of this probable proposition, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom and moral fitness, is obvious and easy. But these scriptures are not so come down to us : they are come down broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations, and transpositions, made we neither know when, nor by whom ; and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book, on whose authority men have agreed to rely.

THIS being so, my lord, what hypothesis shall we follow ? Shall we adhere to some such distinction as I have mentioned ? Shall we say, for instance, that the scriptures were written originally by the authors to whom they are vulgarly ascribed, but that these authors writ nothing by inspiration, except the legal, the doctrinal, and the prophetical parts, and that in every other respect their authority is purely human, and therefore fallible ? Or shall we say that these histories are nothing more than compilations of old traditions, and abridgments of old records, made in later times, as they appear to every one who reads them without prepossession, and with

with attention? Shall we add, that which ever of those probabilities be true, we may believe, consistently with either, notwithstanding the decision of any divines, who know no more than you or I, or any other man, of the order of providence, that all those parts and passages of the old testament, which contain prophecies or matters of law or doctrine, and which were from the first of such importance in the designs of providence to all future generations and even to the whole race of mankind, have been from the first the peculiar care of providence? Shall we insist that such particular parts and passages, which are plainly marked out and sufficiently confirmed by the system of the Christian revelation, and by the completion of the prophecies, have been preserved from corruption by ways impenetrable to us, amidst all the changes and chances to which the books wherein they are recorded have been exposed? And that neither original writers, nor later compilers, have been suffered to make any essential alterations, such as would have falsified the law of God and the principles of the Jewish and Christian religions, in any of these divine fundamental truths? Upon such hypotheses, we may assert without scruple, that the genea-

logies and histories of the old testament are in no respect sufficient foundations for a chronology from the beginning of time, nor for Universal history. But then the same hypotheses will secure the infallibility of scripture authority as far as religion is concerned. Faith and reason may be reconciled a little better than they commonly are. I may deny that the old testament is transmitted to us under all the conditions of an authentic history, and yet be at liberty to maintain that the passages in it which establish original sin, which seem favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, and all others of similar kind, are come down to us as they were originally dictated by the Holy Ghost.

IN attributing the whole credibility of the old testament to the authority of the new, and in limiting the authenticity of the Jewish scriptures to those parts alone that concern law, doctrine and prophecy, by which their chronology and the far greatest part of their history are excluded, I will venture to assure your lordship that I do not assume, so much as is assumed in every hypothesis, that affixes the divine seal of inspiration to the whole canon ; that rests the whole proof on Jewish veracity,  
and



and that pretends to account particularly and positively for the descent of these ancient writings in their present state.

ANOTHER reason, for which I have insisted the rather on the distinction so often mentioned, is this. I think we may find very good foundation for it even in the bible : and tho this be a point very little attended to, and much disguised, it would not be hard to shew, upon great inducements of probability, that the law and the history were far from being blended together as they now stand in the pentateuch, even from the time of MOSES down to that of ESDRAS. But the principal and decisive reason for separating in such manner the legal, doctrinal and prophetical parts, from the historical, is the necessity of having some rule to go by : and I protest I know of none that is yet agreed upon. I content myself therefore to fix my opinion concerning the authority of the old testament in this manner, and carry it thus far only. We must do so, or we must enter into that labyrinth of dispute and contradiction, wherein even the most orthodox Jews and Christians have wandered so many ages, and still wander. It is strange but it is true ; not only the Jews differ from the Christians, but Jews and

Christians both differ among themselves, concerning almost every point that is necessary to be certainly known and agreed upon, in order to establish the authority of books which both have received already as authentic and sacred. So that whoever takes the pains to read what learned men have writ on this subject will find that they leave the matter as doubtful as they took it up. Who were the authors of these scriptures, when they were published, how they were composed and preserved, or renewed, to use a remarkable expression of the famous HUNT in his demonstration ; in fine, how they were lost during the captivity, and how they were retrieved after it, are all matters of controversy to this day.

It would be easy for me to descend into a greater detail, and to convince your lordship of what I have been saying in general by an induction of particulars, even without any other help than that of a few notes which I took when I applied myself to this examination, and which now lye before me. But such a digression would carry me too far : and I fear that you will think I have said already more than enough upon this part of my subject. I go on therefore to observe to your lordship, that  
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if the history of the old testament was as exact and as authentic, as the ignorance and impudence of some rabbies have made them assert that it is : if we could believe with them that MOSES wrote every syllable in the pentateuch as it now stands, or that all the psalms were written by DAVID : nay, if we could believe, with PHILO and JOSEPHUS, that MOSES wrote the account of his own death and sepulture, and made a sort of a funeral panegyric on himself, as we find them in the last chapter of Deuteronomy ; yet still would I venture to assert, that he who expects to find a system of chronology, or a thread of history, or sufficient materials for either, in the books of the old testament, expects to find what the authors of these books, whoever they were, never intended. They are extracts of genealogies, not genealogies ; extracts of histories, not histories. The Jews themselves allow their genealogies to be very imperfect, and produce examples of omissions and errors in them, which denote sufficiently that these genealogies are extracts, wherein every generation in the course of descent is not mentioned. I have read somewhere, perhaps in the works of St. JEROME, that this father justifies the opinion of those who think it

impossible to fix any certain chronology on that of the bible: and this opinion will be justified still better, to the understanding of every man that considers how grossly the Jews blunder whenever they meddle with chronology; for this plain reason, because their scriptures are imperfect in this respect, and because they rely on their oral, to rectify and supply their written traditions. That is, they rely on traditions compiled long after the canon of their scriptures, but deemed by them of equal antiquity and authority. Thus for instance, DANIEL and SIMON the just, according to them, were members at the same time of the great synagogue which began and finished the canon of the old testament, under the presidency of ESDRAS. This ESDRAS was the prophet MALACHI. DARIUS the son of HYSTASPES was ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS; he was AHASUERUS, and he was the same DARIUS whom ALEXANDER conquered. This may serve as a sample of Jewish chronology, formed on their scriptures which afford insufficient lights, and on their traditions which afford false lights. We are indeed more correct, and come nearer to the truth in these instances, perhaps in some others, because we make use of profane chronology to help  
us.



us. But profane chronology is itself so modern, so broken, and so precarious, that this help does not reach to the greatest part of that time to which sacred chronology extends ; that when it begins to help, it begins to perplex us too ; and finally, that even with this help we should not have had so much as the appearance of a complete chronological system, and the same may be said of Universal history, if learned men had not proceeded very wisely, on one uniform maxim, from the first ages of christianity, when a custom of sanctifying prophane learning, as well as prophane rites, which the Jews had imprudently laid aside, was taken up by the Christians. The maxim I mean is this, that prophane authority be admitted without scruple or doubt, whenever it says, or whenever it can be made to say, if not totidem verbis, yet totidem syllabis, or totidem literis at least, or whenever it can be made by any interpretation to mean, what confirms, or supplies in a constant manner, the holy writ ; and that the same authority be rejected, when nothing of this kind can be done, but the contradiction or inconsistency remains irreconcilable. Such a liberty as this would not be allowed in any other case ; because it supposes the very thing

that is to be proved. But we see it taken, very properly to be sure, in favour of sacred and infallible writings, when they are compared with others.

IN order to perceive with the utmost evidence, that the scope and design of the author or authors of the pentateuch, and of the other books of the old testament, answer as little the purpose of antiquaries, in history as in chronology, it will be sufficient briefly to call to mind the sum of what they relate, from the creation of the world to the establishment of the Persian empire. If the antediluvian world continued one thousand six hundred and fifty six years, and if the vocation of ABRAHAM is to be placed four hundred and twenty six years below the deluge, these twenty centuries make almost two thirds of the period mentioned : and the whole history of them is comprized in eleven short chapters of Genesis ; which is certainly the most compendious extract that ever was made. If we examine the contents of these chapters, do we find any thing like an universal history, or so much as an abridgment of it ? ADAM and EVE were created, they broke the commandment of GOD, they were driven out of the garden of Eden, one of their sons killed his brother, but  
their

their race soon multiplied and peopled the earth. What geography now have we, what history of this antediluvian world? Why none. The sons of GOD, it is said, lay with the daughters of men, and begot giants, and GOD drowned all the inhabitants of the earth, except one family. After this we read that the earth was repopled; but these children of one family were divided into several languages, even whilst they lived together, spoke the same language, and were employed in the same work. Out of one of the countries into which they dispersed themselves, Chaldaea, GOD called ABRAHAM some time afterwards, with magnificent promises, and conducted him to a country called Chanaan. Did this author, my lord, intend an universal history? Certainly not. The tenth chapter of Genesis names indeed some of the generations descending from the sons of NOAH, some of the cities founded, and some of the countries planted by them. But what are bare names, naked of circumstances, without descriptions of countries, or relations of events? They furnish matter only for guess and dispute; and even the similitude of them, which is often used as a clue to lead us to the discovery of historical truth, has notoriously contributed,

buted to propagate error, and to encrease the perplexity of ancient tradition. These imperfect and dark accounts have not furnished matter for guess and dispute alone, but a much worse use has been made of them by Jewish rabbies, Christian fathers, and Mahometan doctors, in their prophane extensions of this part of the Mosaic history. The creation of the first man is described by some, as if, Preadamites, they had assisted at it. They talk of his beauty as if they had seen him, of his gigantic size as if they had measured him, and of his prodigious knowledge as if they had conversed with him. They point out the very spot where EVE laid her head the first time he enjoyed her. They have minutes of the whole conversation between this mother of mankind, who damned her children before she bore them, and the serpent. Some are positive that CAIN quarrelled with ABEL about a point of doctrine, and others affirm that the dispute arose about a girl. A great deal of such stuff may be easily collected about ENOCH, about NOAH, and about the sons of NOAH; but I wave any farther mention of such impertinencies as BONZES or TALAPOINS would almost blush to relate. Upon the whole matter, if we may guess at the



the design of an author by the contents of his book ; the design of MOSES, or of the author of the history ascribed to him in this part of it, was to inform the people of Israel of their descent from NOAH by SEM, and of NOAH's from ADAM by SETH ; to illustrate their original ; to establish their claim to the land of Chanaan, and to justify all the cruelties committed by JOSHUA in the conquest of the Chanaanites, in whom, says BOCHART, " the prophecy of NOAH " was completed, when they were subdued by the Israelites, who had been so long slaves to the Egyptians."

ALLOW me to make, as I go along, a short reflection or two on this prophecy, and the completion of it, as they stand recorded in the pentateuch, out of many that might be made. The terms of the prophecy then are not very clear : and the curse pronounced in it contradicts all our notions of order and of justice. One is tempted to think, that the patriarch was still drunk ; and that no man in his senses could hold such language, or pass such a sentence. Certain it is, that no writer but a Jew could impute to the oeconomy of divine providence the accomplishment of such a prediction, nor make the supreme Being the executor of such a curse.

HAM

HAM alone offended : CHANAAN was innocent ; for the Hebrew and other doctors, who would make the son an accomplice with his father, affirm not only without, but against, the express authority of the text. CHANAAN was however alone cursed : and he became, according to his grandfather's prophecy, " a servant of " servants," that is, the vilest and worst of slaves (for I take these words in a sense, if not the most natural, the most favourable to the prophecy, and the least absurd) to SEM, tho not to JAPHET, when the Israelites conquered Palestine ; to one of his uncles, not to his brethren. Will it be said---it has been said---that where we read CHANAAN, we are to understand HAM, whose brethren SEM and JAPHET were ? At this rate, we shall never know what we read : as these critics never care what they say. Will it be said---this has been said too---that HAM was punished in his posterity, when CHANAAN was cursed, and his descendants were exterminated. But who does not see that the curse, and the punishment, in this case, fell on CHANAAN and his posterity, exclusively of the rest of the posterity of HAM ; and were therefore the curse and punishment of the son, not of the father, properly ? The descendants

scendants of MESRAIM, another of his sons, were the Egyptians: and they were so far from being servants of servants to their cousins the Semites, that these were servants of servants to them, during more than fourscore years. Why the posterity of CHANAAN was to be deemed an accursed race, it is easy to account; and I have mentioned it just now. But it is not so easy to account, why the posterity of the righteous SEM, that great example of filial reverence, became slaves to another branch of the family of HAM.

It would not be worth while to lengthen this tedious letter, by setting down any more of the contents of the history of the bible. Your lordship may please to call the substance of it to your mind, and your native candor and love of truth will oblige you then to confess, that these sacred books do not aim in any part of them at any thing like universal chronology and history. They contain a very imperfect account of the Israelites themselves; of their settlement in the land of promise, of which, by the way, they never had entire, and scarce ever peaceable possession; of their divisions, apostasies, repentances, relapses, triumphs, and defeats, under the occasional government of their judges, and under

der that of their kings ; of the Galilean and Samaritan captivities, into which they were carried by the kings of Assyria, and of that which was brought on the remnant of this people when the kingdom of Judah was destroyed by those princes who governed the empire founded on the union of Niniveh and Babylon. These things are all related, your lordship knows, in a very summary and confused manner : and we learn so little of other nations by these accounts, that if we did not borrow some light from the traditions of other nations, we should scarce understand them. One particular observation, and but one, I will make, to show what knowledge in the history of mankind, and in the computation of time, may be expected from these books. The Assyrians were their neighbours, powerful neighbours, with whom they had much and long to do. Of this empire therefore, if of any thing, we might hope to find some satisfactory accounts. What do we find ? The scripture takes no notice of any Assyrian kingdom, till just before the time when prophane history makes that empire to end. Then we hear of PHUL, of TEG-LATH-PHALASSER, who was perhaps the same person, and of SALMANASER, who took Samaria in the twelfth of the aera of

NA-



NABONASSER, that is, twelve years after the Assyrian empire was no more. SENACHERIB succeeds to him, and ASSERHAD-DON to SENACHERIB. What shall we say to this apparent contrariety? If the silence of the bible creates a strong presumption against the first, may not the silence of prophane authority create some against the second Assyrian monarchs? The pains that are taken to persuade, that there is room enough between SARDANAPALUS and CYRUS for the second, will not resolve the difficulty. Something much more plausible may be said, but even this will be hypothetical, and liable to great contradiction. So that upon the whole matter, the scriptures are so far from giving us light into general history, that they encrease the obscurity even of those parts to which they have the nearest relation. We have therefore neither in prophane nor in sacred authors such authentic, clear, distinct, and full accounts of the originals of ancient nations, and of the great events of those ages that are commonly called the first ages, as deserve to go by the name of history, or as afford sufficient materials for chronology and history.

I MIGHT now proceed to observe to your lordship how this has happened, not only

only by the necessary consequences of human nature, and the ordinary course of human affairs, but by the policy, artifice, corruption and folly of mankind. But this would be to heap digression upon digression, and to presume too much on your patience. I shall therefore content myself to apply these reflections on the state of ancient history to the study of history, and to the method to be observed in it ; as soon as your lordship has rested yourself a little after reading, and I after writing so long a letter.

OF

OF THE  
STUDY of HISTORY.

LETTER IV.

I. That there is in history sufficient authenticity to render it useful, notwithstanding all objections to the contrary.

II. Of the method and due restrictions to be observed in the study of it.

**W**HETHER the letter I now begin to write will be long or short I know not : but I find my memory is refreshed, my imagination warmed, and matter flows in so fast upon me, that I have not time to press it close. Since therefore you have provoked me to write, you must be content to take what follows.

I HAVE observed already that we are apt naturally to apply to our selves what has happened

happened to other men, and that examples take their force from hence ; as well those which history, as those which experience, offers to our reflexion. What we do not believe to have happened therefore, we shall not thus apply : and for want of the same application, such examples will not have the same effect. Antient history, such antient history as I have described, is quite unfit therefore in this respect to answer the ends that every reasonable man should promise to himself in this study ; because such antient history will never gain sufficient credit with any reasonable man. A tale well told, or a comedy or a tragedy well wrought up, may have a momentary effect upon the mind, by heating the imagination, surprizing the judgment, and affecting strongly the passions. The Athenians are said to have been transported into a kind of martial phrenzy by the representation of a tragedy of *AESCHYLUS*, and to have marched under this influence from the theatre to the plains of *MARATHON*. These momentary impressions might be managed, for aught I know, in such manner as to contribute a little, by frequent repetitions of them, towards maintaining a kind of habitual contempt of folly, detestation of vice, and admiration of  
virtue



virtue in well-policed common-wealths. But then these impressions cannot be made, nor this little effect be wrought, unless the fables bear an appearance of truth. When they bear this appearance, reason connives at the innocent fraud of imagination ; reason dispenses, in favour of probability, with those strict rules of criticism that she has established to try the truth of fact : but after all, she receives these fables as fables ; and as such only she permits imagination to make the most of them. If they pretended to be history, they would be soon subjected to another and more severe examination. What may have happened, is the matter of an ingenious fable : what has happened, is that of an authentic history : the impressions which one or the other makes are in proportion. When imagination grows lawless and wild, rambles out of the precincts of nature, and tells of heroes and giants, faries and enchanters, of events and of phaenomena repugnant to universal experience, to our clearest and most distinct ideas, and to all the known laws of nature, reason does not connive a moment ; but far from receiving such narrations as historical, she rejects them as unworthy to be placed even among the fabulous. Such narrations

ons therefore cannot make the slightest momentary impressions, on a mind fraught with knowledge, and void of superstition. Imposed by authority, and assisted by artifice, the delusion hardly prevails over common sense ; blind ignorance almost sees, and rash superstition hesitates : nothing less than enthusiasm and phrenzy can give credit to such histories, or apply such examples. Don QUIXOTE believed ; but even SANCHO doubted.

WHAT I have said will not be much controverted by any man who has read AMADIS of Gaul, or has examined our ancient traditions without prepossession. The truth is, the principal difference between them seems to be this. In AMADIS of Gaul, we have a thread of absurdities that are invented without any regard to probability, and that lay no claim to belief : antient traditions are an heap of fables, under which some particular truths, inscrutable, and therefore useless to mankind, may lie, concealed ; which have a just pretence to nothing more, and yet impose themselves upon us, and become under the venerable name of antient history the foundations of modern fables ; the materials with which so many systems of fancy have been erected.

BUT

BUT now, as men are apt to carry their judgments into extremes, there are some that will be ready to insist that all history is fabulous, and that the very best is nothing better than a probable tale, artfully contrived, and plausibly told, wherein truth and falsehood are indistinguishably blended together. All the instances, and all the common place arguments, that BAYLE and others have employed to establish this sort of Pyrrhonism, will be quoted : and from thence it will be concluded, that if the pretended histories of the first ages, and of the originals of nations, be too improbable and too ill vouched to procure any degree of belief, those histories that have been writ later, that carry a greater air of probability and that boast even contemporary authority, are at least insufficient to gain that degree of firm belief which is necessary to render the study of them useful to mankind. But here that happens which often happens : the premises are true, and the conclusion is false ; because a general axiom is established precariously on a certain number of partial observations. This matter is of consequence ; for it tends to ascertain the degrees of assent that we may give to history.

I AGREE

I AGREE then that history has been purposely and systematically falsified in all ages, and that partiality and prejudice have occasioned both voluntary and involuntary errors even in the best. Let me say without offence, my lord, since I may say it with truth and am able to prove it, that ecclesiastical authority has led the way to this corruption in all ages, and all religions. How monstrous were the absurdities that the priesthood imposed on the ignorance and superstition of mankind in the Pagan world, concerning the originals of religions and governments, their institutions and rites, their laws and customs? What opportunities had they for such impositions, whilst the keeping the records and collecting the traditions, was in so many nations the peculiar office of this order of men? A custom highly extolled by JOSEPHUS, but plainly liable to the grossest frauds, and even a temptation to them. If the foundations of Judaism and Christianity have been laid in truth, yet what numberless fables have been invented to raise, to embellish and to support these structures, according to the interest and taste of the several architects? That the Jews have been guilty of this will be allowed: and to the shame of Christians, if not  
of



of Christianity, the fathers of one church have no right to throw the first stone at the fathers of the other. Deliberate systematical lying has been practised and encouraged from age to age ; and among all the pious frauds that have been employed to maintain a reverence and zeal for their Religion in the minds of men, this abuse of history has been one of the principal and most successful : an evident and experimental proof, by the way, of what I have insisted upon so much, the aptitude and natural tendency of history to form our opinions, and to settle our habits. This righteous expedient was in so much use and repute in the Greek church, that one METAPHRASTUS wrote a treatise on the art of composing holy romances : the fact, if I remember right, is cited by BAILLET in his book of the lives of the saints. He, and other learned men of the Roman Church, have thought it of service to their cause, since the resurrection of letters, to detect some impostures, and to depose, or to un-niche according to the French expression, now and then a reputed saint ; but they seem in doing this to mean no more than a sort of composition : they give up some fables that they may defend others with greater advantage, and they make truth serve as a stalking-horse to error. The

same spirit, that prevailed in the Eastern church, prevailed in the Western, and prevails still. A strong proof of it appeared lately in the country where I am. A sudden fury of devotion seized the people of Paris for a little priest \*, undistinguished during his life, and dubbed a saint by the Jansenists after his death. Had the first Minister been a Jansenist, the saint had been a saint still. All France had kept his festival : and, since there are thousands of eye-witnesses ready to attest the truth of all the miracles supposed to have been wrought at his tomb, notwithstanding the discouragement which these zealots have met with from the government ; we may assure our selves, that these silly impostures would have been transmitted in all the solemn pomp of history, from the knaves of this age to the fools of the next.

THIS lying spirit has gone forth from ecclesiastical to other historians : and I might fill many pages with instances of extravagant fables that have been invented in several nations, to celebrate their antiquity, to ennoble their originals, and to make them appear illustrious in the arts of peace and the triumphs of war. When the brain is well heated, and devotion or vanity, the semblance of virtue or of real vice, and above all, disputes and contests, have inspired that complication of passions we term zeal, the effects

\* The abbé Paris.

effects are much the same, and history becomes very often a lying panegyric or a lying satire ; for different nations, or different parties in the same nation, belie one another without any respect for truth, as they murder one another without any regard to right or sense of humanity. Religious zeal may boast this horrid advantage over civil zeal, that the effects of it have been more sanguinary, and the malice more unrelenting. In another respect they are more alike, and keep a nearer proportion : different religions have not been quite so barbarous to one another as sects of the same religion ; and in like manner nation has had better quarter from nation, than party from party. But, in all these controversies, men have pushed their rage beyond their own and their adversaries lives : they have endeavoured to interest posterity in their quarrels, and by rendering history subservient to this wicked purpose, they have done their utmost to perpetuate scandal, and to immortalize their animosity. The Heathen taxed the Jews even with idolatry ; the Jews joined with the Heathen to render Christianity odious : but the church, who beat them at their own weapons during these contests, has had this further triumph over them, as well as over the several sects that have arisen within her own pale ; the works of those

who have writ against her have been destroyed ; and whatever she advanced, to justify her self and to defame her adversaries, is preserved in her annals, and the writings of her doctors.

THE charge of corrupting history, in the cause of religion, has been always committed to the most famous champions, and greatest saints of each church ; and if I was not more afraid of tiring, than of scandalizing your lordship, I would quote to you examples of modern churchmen who have endeavoured to justify foul language by the new testament, and cruelty by the old : nay, what is execrable beyond imagination, and what strikes horror into every mind that entertains due sentiments of the supreme Being, GOD himself has been cited for rallying and insulting ADAM after his fall. In other cases, this charge belongs to the pedants of every nation, and the tools of every party. What accusations of idolatry and superstition have not been brought, and aggravated against the Mahometans ? Those wretched Christians who returned from those wars, so improperly called the holy wars, rumoured these stories about the west : and you may find, in some of the old chroniclers and romance writers, as well as poets, the Saracens called Paynims ; tho surely they were much further off from any suspicion of polytheism, than



than those who called them by that name. When MAHOMET the second took Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the Mahometans began to be a little better, and but a little better known, than they had been before, to these parts of the world. But their religion, as well as their customs and manners, was strangely misrepresented by the Greek refugees that fled from the Turks: and the terror and hatred which this people had inspired by the rapidity of their conquests, and by their ferocity, made all these misrepresentations universally pass for truth. Many such instances may be collected from MORACCIO's refutation of the koran, and RELANDUS has published a very valuable treatise on purpose to refute these calumnies, and to justify the Mahometans. Does not this example incline your lordship to think that the Heathens, and the Arians and other heretics, would not appear quite so absurd in their opinions, nor so abominable in their practice, as the orthodox Christians have represented them; if some RELANDUS could arise, with the materials, necessary to their justification, in his hands? He who reflects on the circumstances that attended letters, from the time when CONSTANTINE, instead of uniting the characters of emperor and sovereign pontiff in himself when he became Christian, as they were united to him and all

the other emperors in the Pagan system of government, gave so much independent wealth and power to the clergy, and the means of acquiring so much more: he who carries these reflections on through all the latter empire, and through those ages of ignorance and superstition, wherein it was hard to say which was greatest, the tyranny of the clergy, or the servility of the laity: he who considers the extreme severity, for instance, of the laws made by THEODOSIUS in order to stifle every writing that the orthodox clergy, that is the clergy then in fashion, disliked; or the character and influence of such a priest as GREGORY called the great, who proclaimed war to all heathen learning in order to promote Christian verity; and flattered BRUNEHAUT, and abetted PHOCAS: he who considers all these things, I say, will not be at a loss to find the reasons, why history, both that which was writ before, and a great part of that which has been writ since the christian aera, it come to us so imperfect and so corrupt.

WHEN the imperfection is due to a total want of memorials, either because none were originally written, or because they have been lost by devastations of countries, extirpations of people, and other accidents in a long course of time: or because zeal, malice, and policy have joined their endeavours to destroy

stroy them purposely; we must be content to remain in our ignorance, and there is no great harm in that. Secure from being deceived, I can submit to be uninformed. But when there is not a total want of memorials, when some have been lost or destroyed, and others have been preserved and propagated, then we are in danger of being deceived: and therefore he must be very implicit indeed who receives for true the history of any religion or nation, and much more that of any sect or party, without having the means of confronting it with some other history. A reasonable man will not be thus implicit. He will not establish the truth of history on single, but on concurrent testimony. If there be none such, he will doubt absolutely: if there be a little such, he will proportion his assent or dissent accordingly. A small gleam of light, borrowed from foreign anecdotes, serves often to discover a whole system of falshood: and even they, who corrupt history, frequently betray themselves by their ignorance or inadvertency. Examples whereof I could easily produce. Upon the whole matter, in all these cases, we cannot be deceived essentially, unless we please: and therefore there is no reason to establish Pyrrhonism, that we may avoid the ridicule of credulity.

IN all other cases, there is less reason still to do so ; for when histories and historical memorials abound, even those that are false serve to the discovery of the truth. Inspired by different passions, and contrived for opposite purposes, they contradict ; and, contradicting, they convict one another. Criticism separates the ore from the dross, and extracts from various authors a series of true history, which could not have been found entire in any one of them, and will command our assent, when it is formed with judgment, and represented with candor. If this may be done, as it has been done sometimes, with the help of authors who writ on purpose to deceive ; how much more easily, and more effectually, may it be done with the help of those who paid a greater regard to truth ? In a multitude of writers there will be always some, either incapable of gross prevarication from the fear of being discovered, and of acquiring infamy whilst they seek for fame ; or else attached to truth upon a nobler and surer principle. It is certain that these, even the last of them, are fallible. Bribed by some passion or other, the former may venture now and then to propagate a falshood, or to disguise a truth ; like the painter that drew in profile, as LUCIAN says, the picture of a prince that had but one eye. MONTAGNE objects to the me-



memorials of DU BELLAY, that tho the gross of the facts be truly related, yet these authors turned every thing they mentioned to the advantage of their master, and mentioned nothing which could not be so turned. The old fellow's words are worth quoting, --  
 " De contourner le judgment des evenemens  
 " souvent contre raison à notre avantage, &  
 " d' obmettre tout ce qu' il y a de chatou-  
 " illeux en la vie de leur maitre, ils en font  
 " mestier." These, and such as these, deviate occasionally and voluntarily from truth; but even they, who are attached to it the most religiously, may slide sometimes into involuntary error. In matters of history we prefer very justly cotemporary authority, and yet cotemporary authors are the most liable to be warped from the strait rule of truth, in writing on subjects which have affected them strongly, " & quorum pars magna  
 " fuerunt." I am so persuaded of this, from what I have felt in my self, and observed in others, that if life and health enough fall to my share, and I am able to finish what I meditate, a kind of history, from the late queen's accession to the throne, to the peace of Utrecht, there will be no materials that I shall examine more scrupulously and severely, than those of the time when the events to be spoken of were in transaction. But tho the writers of these two sorts, both

of whom pay as much regard to truth as the various infirmities of our nature admit, are fallible; yet this fallibility will not be sufficient to give color to Pyrrhonism. Where their sincerity as to fact is doubtful, we strike out truth by the confrontation of different accounts: as we strike out sparks of fire by the collision of flints and steel. Where their judgments are suspicious of partiality, we may judge for our selves; or adopt their judgments, after weighing them with certain grains of allowance. A little natural sagacity will proportion these grains, according to the particular circumstances of the authors, or their general characters; for even these influence. Thus MONTAGNE pretends, but he exaggerates a little, that GUICCIARDIN no where ascribes any one action to a virtuous, but every one to a vicious principle. Something like this has been reproached to TACITUS: and notwithstanding all the sprightly loose observations of MONTAGNE in one of his essays where he labours to prove the contrary, read PLUTARCH's comparisons in what language you please. I am of BODIN's mind, you will perceive that they were made by a Greek. In short, my lord, the favourable opportunities of corrupting history have been often interrupted, and are now over in so many countries, that truth penetrates even into those

those where lying continues still to be part of the policy ecclesiastical and civil; or where, to say the best we can say, truth is never suffered to appear, till she has passed through hands, out of which she seldom returns entire and undefiled.

BUT it is time I should conclude this head, under which I have touched some of those reasons that shew the folly of endeavouring to establish universal Pyrrhonism in matters of history, because there are few histories without some lies, and none without some mistakes; and that prove the body of history which we possess, since antient memorials have been so critically examined, and modern memorials have been so multiplied, to contain in it such a probable series of events, easily distinguishable from the improbable, as force the assent of every man who is in his senses, and are therefore sufficient to answer all the purposes of the study of history. I might have appealed perhaps, without entering into the argument at all, to any man of candor, whether his doubts concerning the truth of history have hindered him from applying the examples he has met with in it, and from judging of the present, and sometimes of the future by the past? whether he has not been touched with reverence and admiration, at the virtue and wisdom of some men, and of some ages; and whether

whether he has not felt indignation and contempt for others? whether EPAMINONDAS, or PHOCION, for instance, the DECII, or the SCIPIOS, have not raised in his mind a flame of public spirit, and private virtue? and whether he has not shuddered with horror at the proscriptions of MARIUS and SYLLA, at the treachery of THEODOTUS and ACHILLAS, and at the consummate cruelty of an infant king? “Quis non contra MARIUM arma, & contra SYLLAM proscriptionem concitatur? Quis non THEODOTO, & ACHILLAE, & ipsi puero, non puerile auso facinus, infestus est?” If all this be a digression therefore, your lordship will be so good as to excuse it.

II. WHAT has been said concerning the multiplicity of histories, and of historical memorials, wherewith our libraries abound since the resurrection of letters happened, and the art of printing began, puts me in mind of another general rule, that ought to be observed by every man who intends to make a real improvement, and to become wiser as well as better, by the study of history. I hinted at this rule in a former letter, where I said that we should neither grope in the dark nor wander in the light. History must have a certain degree of probability and authenticity, or the examples we find in it will not carry a force sufficient to make due impressions



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impressions on our minds, nor to illustrate nor to strengthen the precepts of philosophy and the rules of good policy. But besides, when histories have this necessary authenticity and probability, there is much discernment to be employed in the choice and the use we make of them. Some are to be read, some are to be studied, and some may be neglected entirely, not only without detriment, but with advantage. Some are the proper objects of one man's curiosity, some of others, and some of all men's; but all history is not an object of curiosity for any man. He who improperly, wantonly, and absurdly makes it so, indulges a sort of canine appetite: the curiosity of one, like the hunger of the other, devours ravenously and without distinction whatever falls in it's way: but neither of them digests. They heap crudity upon crudity, and nourish and improve nothing but their dystemper. Some such characters I have known, tho it is not the most common extreme into which men are apt to fall. One of them I knew in this country. He joined, to a more than athletic strength of body, a prodigious memory; and to both a prodigious industry. He had read almost constantly twelve or fourteen hours a day, for five and twenty or thirty years; and had heaped together as much learning as could be crouded into an head.

In

In the course of my acquaintance with him, I consulted him once or twice, not oftener; for I found this mass of learning of as little use to me as to the owner. The man was communicative enough, but nothing was distinct in his mind. How could it be otherwise? he had never spared time to think, all was employed in reading. His reason had not the merit of common mechanism. When you press a watch or pull a clock, they answer your question with precision; for they repeat exactly the hour of the day, and tell you neither more nor less than you desire to know. But when you asked this man a question, he overwhelmed you by pouring forth all that the several terms or words of your question recalled to his memory; and if he omitted any thing, it was that very thing to which the sense of the whole question should have led him and confined him. To ask him a question, was to wind up a spring in his memory, that rattled on with vast rapidity, and confused noise till the force of it was spent: and you went away with all the noise in your ears, stunned and un-inform'd. I never left him that I was not ready to say to him "Dieu  
 "vous fasse la grace de devenir moins  
 "scavant!" a wish that LA MOTHE LE  
 VAYER mentions upon some occasion or  
 other,

## Of the STUDY of HISTORY. IIII

other, and that he would have done well to have applyed to himself upon many.

He who reads with discernment and choice, will acquire less learning, but more knowledge : and as this knowledge is collected with design, and cultivated with art and method, it will be at all times of immediate and ready use to himself and others.

Thus useful arms in magazines we place,

All rang'd in order ; and dispos'd with grace :

Nor thus alone the curious eye to please ;

But to be found, when need requires, with ease.

You remember the verses, my lord, in our friend's essay on criticism, which was the work of his childhood almost ; but is such a monument of good sense and poetry as no other that I know has raised in his riper years.

He who reads without this discernment and choice, and like, BODIN's pupil, resolves to read all, will not have time, nor nor capacity neither, to do any thing else. He will not be able to think, without which it is impertinent to read ; nor to act, without which it is impertinent to think. He will assemble materials with much pains, and purchase them at much expence, and have neither leisure nor skill to frame them into proper scantlings, or to prepare them for use. To what purpose should he husband his time, or learn architecture ? he has no design to build. But then to what purpose

all

all these quarries of stone, all these mountains of sand and lime, all these forests of oak and deal? “*Magno impendio temporum, magna alienarum aurium molestia, laudatio haec constat, O hominem litteratum! Simus hoc titulo rusticiore contenti, O virum bonum!*” We may add, and *SENECA* might have added in his own style, and according to the manners and characters of his own age, another title as rustic, and as little in fashion, “*O virum sapientia sua simplicem, & simplicitate sua sapientem! O virum utilem sibi, suis, reipublicae, & humano generi!*” I have said perhaps already, but no matter, it cannot be repeated too often, that the drift of all philosophy, and of all political speculations, ought to be the making us better men, and better citizens. Those studies, which have no intention towards improving our moral characters, have no pretence to be styled philosophical. “*Quis est enim,*” says *TULLY* in his offices, “*qui nullis officii praeceptis tradendis, philosophum se audeat dicere?*” Whatever political speculation, instead of preparing us to be useful to society and to promote the happiness of mankind, are only systems for gratifying private ambition, and promoting private interests at the public expence; all such, I say, deserve to be burnt, and the authors of them to starve, like *MACHIAVEL*, in a jail.

L E T-



[ 113 ]  
L E T T E R V.

- I. *The great use of history, properly so called, as distinguished from the writings of mere annalists and antiquaries.*
- II. *Greek and Roman historians.*
- III. *Some idea of a complete history.*
- IV. *Further cautions to be observed in this study, and the regulation of it according to the different professions, and situations of men : above all, the use to be made of it (1) by divines, and (2) by those who are called to the service of their country.*

**I** REMEMBER my last letter ended abruptly, and a long interval has since passed : so that the thread I had then spun has slipped from me. I will try to recover it, and to pursue the task your lordship has obliged me continue. Besides the pleasure of obeying your orders, it is likewise of some advantage to myself, to recollect my thoughts, and resume a study in which I was conversant formerly. For nothing can be more true than that saying of SOLON reported by PLATO, tho censured by him imperitently enough in one of his wild books of laws----- *Affiduè addiscens, ad senium vanio.* The truth is, the most knowing man in the course of the longest life, will have always much to learn, and the wisest and best much to improve. This rule will hold in the knowledge

knowledge and improvement to be acquired by the study of history : and therefore even he who has gone to this school in his youth, should not neglect it in his age. “ I read in LIVY, says MONTAIGNE, what another man does not : and PLUTARCH read there what I do not :” Just so the same man may read at fifty what he did not read in the same book at five and twenty : at least I have found so, by my own experience on many occasions.

By comparing, in this study, the experience of other men and other ages with our own, we improve both: we analyse, as it were, philosophy. We reduce all the abstract speculations of ethics, and all the general rules of human policy, to their first principles. With these advantages every man may, tho few men do, advance daily towards those ideas, those increated essences a Platonist would say, which no human creature can reach in practice, but in the nearest approaches to which the perfection of our nature consists: because every approach of this kind renders a man better, and wiser, for himself, for his family, for the little community of his own country, and for the great community of the world. Be not surprized, my Lord, at the order in which I place these objects. Whatever order divines and moralists, who contemplate the duties belonging

belonging to these objects, may place them in, this is the order they hold in nature: and I have always thought that we might lead ourselves and others to private virtue, more effectually by a due observation of this order, than by any of those sublime refinements that pervert it.

Self Love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,  
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;  
The centre mov'd, a circle strait succeeds,  
Another still, and still another spreads;  
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,  
His country next, and next all human race.

So sings our friend POPE, my lord, and so I believe. So I shall prove too, if I mistake not, in an epistle I am about to write to him, in order to complete a set that were writ some years ago.

A MAN of my age, who returns to the study of history, has no time to lose, because he has little to live: a man of your lordship's age has no time to lose, because he has much to do. For different reasons therefore the same rules will suit us. Neither of us must grope in the dark, neither of us must wander in the light. I have done the first formerly a good deal; *ne verba mihi darentur; ne aliquid esse in hac re condita antiquitatis scientia magni ac secreti boni judicarem.* If you take my word, you will throw none of your time away in the same manner: and I shall have the less re-

gret

gret for that which I have mispent, if I persuade you to hasten down from the broken traditions of antiquity, to the more entire as well as more authentic histories of ages more modern. In the study of these we shall find many a complete series of events, preceded by a deduction of their immediate and remote causes, related in their full extent, and accompanied with such a detail of circumstances, and characters, as may transport the attentive reader back to the very time, make him a party to the councils, and an actor in the whole scene of affairs. Such draughts as these, either found in history or extracted by our own application from it, and such alone, are truly useful. Thus history becomes what she ought to be, and what she has been sometimes called, *magistra vitae*, the mistress, like philosophy, of human life. If she is not this, she is at best *nuntia vetustatis*, the gazette of antiquity, or a dry register of useless anecdotes. SÆTONTIUS says that TIBERIUS used to enquire of the grammarians, *quæ mater Hecubæ, quod Achillis nomen inter virgines fuisset, quid sirenes cantare sint solitæ*? SENECA mentions certain Greek authors, who examined very accurately, whether ANACREON loved wine or women best, whether SAPPHO was a common whore, with other points of equal importance : and I make no doubt but that a  
man,



man, better acquainted than I have the honor to be with the learned persons of our own country, might find some who have discovered several anecdotes concerning the giant ALBION, concerning SAMOTHES the son of BRITO the grandson of JAPHET, and concerning BRUTUS who led a colony into our island after the siege of Troy, as the others re-peopled it after the deluge. But ten millions of such anecdotes as these, tho they were true; and complete authentic volumes of Egyptian or Chaldean, of Greek or Latin, of Gallic or British, of French or Saxon records, would be of no value in my sense, because of no use towards our improvement in wisdom and virtue; if they contained nothing more than dynasties and genealogies, and a bare mention of remarkable events in the order of time, like journals, chronological tables, or dry and meagre annals.

I SAY the same of all those modern compositions in which we find rather the heads of history, than any thing that deserves to be called history. Their authors are either abridgers or compilers. The first do neither honor to themselves nor good to mankind; for surely the abridger is in a form below the translator: and the book, at least the history, that

that wants to be abridged, does not deserve to be read. They have done anciently a great deal of hurt by substituting many a bad book in the place of a good one; and by giving occasion to men, who contented themselves with extracts and abridgments, to neglect, and through their neglect to lose the invaluable originals: for which reason I curse CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENETES as heartily as I do GREGORY. The second are of some use, as far as they contribute to preserve public acts, and dates, and the memory of great events. But they who are thus employed have seldom the means of knowing those private passages on which all public transactions depend, and as seldom the skill and the talents necessary to put what they do know well together: they cannot see the working of the mine, but their industry collects the matter that is thrown out. It is the business, or it should be so, of others to separate the pure ore from the dross, to stamp it into coin, and to enrich not encumber mankind. When there are none sufficient to this task, there may be antiquaries, and there may be journalists or annalists, but there are no historians.

It is worth while to observe the progress that the Romans and the Greeks made

made towards history. The Romans had journalists or annalists from the very beginning of their state. In the sixth century, or very near it at soonest, they began to have antiquaries, and some attempts were made towards writing of history. I call these first historical productions attempts only or essays: and they were no more, neither among the Romans nor among the Greeks. *Graeci ipsi sic initio scriptitarunt, ut noster Cato, ut Pictor, ut Piso.* It is ANTHONY, not the triumvir, my lord, but his grandfather the famous orator, who says this in the second book of *Tully de oratore*: he adds afterwards, *Itaque qualis apud Graecos Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Acusilaus, aliique permulti, talis noster Cato, & Pictor, & Piso.* I know that ANTHONY speaks here strictly of defect of stile and want of oratory. They were *tantummodo narratores, non exornatores*, as he expresses himself; but as they wanted stile and skill to write in such a manner as might answer all the ends of history, so they wanted materials. PHERECYDES writ something about IPHIGENIA, and the festivals of BACCHUS. HELLANICUS was a poetical historian, and ACUSILAUS graved genealogies on plates of brass. PICTOR, who is called by LIVY *scriptorum anti-*

*antiquissimus*, published I think some short annals of his own time. Neither he nor PISO could have sufficient materials for the history of Rome ; nor CATO, I presume, even for the antiquities of Italy. The Romans, with the other people of that country, were then just rising out of barbarity, and growing acquainted with letters ; for those that the Grecian colonies might bring into Sicily, and the southern parts of Italy, spread little, or lasted little, and made in the whole no figure. And whatever learning might have flourished among the ancient Etrurians, which was perhaps at most nothing better than augury and divination and superstitious rites, which were admired and cultivated in ignorant ages, even that was almost entirely worn out of memory. Pedants who would impose all the traditions of the four first ages of Rome, for authentic history, have insisted much on certain annals, of which mention is made in the very place I have just now quoted. *Ab initio rerum Romanarum*, says the same interlocutor, *usque ad P. Mucium pontificem maximum, res omnes singulorum annorum mandabat literis pontifex maximus, efferebatque in album, & proponebat tabulam domi, potestas ut esset populo cognoscendi,*



*nostendi, iidemque etiam nunc annales maximi nominantur.* But, my lord, be pleased to take notice, that the very distinction I make is made here between a bare annalist and an historian: *Erat historia nihil aliud,* in these early days, *nisi annalium confectio.* Take notice likewise, by the way, that LIVY, whose particular application it had been to search into this matter, affirms positively that the greatest part of all public and private monuments, among which he specifies these very annals, had been destroyed in the sack of Rome by the Gauls: and PLUTARCH cites CLODIUS for the same assertion, in the life of NUMA POMPILIUS. Take notice in the last place of that which is more immediately to our present purpose. These annals could contain nothing more than short minutes or memorandums hung up in a table at the pontiff's house, like the rules of the game in a billiard-room, and much such history as we have in the epitomies prefixed to the books of LIVY or of any other historian, in lapidary inscriptions, or in some modern almanacs. Materials for history they were no doubt, but scanty and insufficient; such as those ages could produce when writing and reading were accomplishments

so uncommon, that the praetor was directed by law, *clavum pangere*, to drive a nail into the door of a temple, that the number of years might be reckoned by the number of nails. Such in short as we have in monkish annalists, and other ancient chroniclers of nations now in being : but not such as can entitle the authors of them to be called historians, nor can enable others to write history in that fulness in which it must be written to become a lesson of ethics and politics. The truth is, nations like men have their Infancy : and the few passages of that time, which they retain, are not such as deserved most to be remembered ; but such as, being most proportioned to that age, made the strongest impressions on their minds. In those nations that preserve their dominion long, and grow up to manhood, the elegant as well as the necessary arts and sciences are improved to some degree of perfection : and history, that was at first intended only to record the names or perhaps the general characters of some famous men, and to transmit in gross the remarkable events of every age to posterity, is raised to answer another, and a nobler end.

II. Thus

II. Thus it happened among the Greeks, but much more among the Romans, notwithstanding the prejudices in favour of the former, even among the latter. I have sometimes thought that VIRGIL might have justly ascribed to his country-men the praise of writing history better, as well as that of affording the noblest subjects for it, in those famous verses, \* where the different excellencies of the two nations are so finely touched : but he would have weakened perhaps by lengthening, and have flattened the climax. Open HERODOTUS, you are entertained by an agreeable story-teller, who meant to entertain, and nothing more. Read THUCYDIDES or XENOPHON, you are taught indeed as well as entertained : and the statesman or the general, the philosopher or the orator, speaks to you in every page. They wrote on subjects on which they were well informed, and they treated them fully :

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- \* Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera,  
Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore vultus ;  
Orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus  
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent :  
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento,  
Hae tibi erunt artes, pacique imponere morem ;  
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

they maintained the dignity of history, and thought it beneath them to vamp up old traditions, like the writers of their age and country, and to be the trumpeters of a lying antiquity. The CYROPAEDIA of XENOPHON may be objected perhaps ; but if he gave it for a romance not an history, as he might for aught we can tell, it is out of the case : and if he gave it for an history not a romance, I should prefer his authority to that of HERODOTUS or any other of his countrymen. But however this might be, and whatever merit we may justly ascribe to these two writers, who were almost single in their kind, and who treated but small portions of history ; certain it is in general, that the levity as well as loquacity of the Greeks made them incapable of keeping up to the true standard of history : and even POLYBIUS and DIONYSIUS of Halicarnassus must bow to the great Roman authors. Many principal men of that commonwealth wrote memorials of their own actions and their own times : SYLLA, CAESAR, LABIENUS, POLLIO, AUGUSTUS, and others. What writers of memorials, what compilers of the *materia historica* were these ? What genius was necessary to finish  
up



up the pictures that such masters had sketched? Rome afforded men that were equal to the task. Let the remains, the precious remains, of SALUST, of LIVY, and of TACITUS, witness this truth. When TACITUS wrote, even the appearances of virtue had been long proscribed, and taste was grown corrupt as well as manners. Yet history preserved her integrity and her lustre. She preserved them in the writings of some whom TACITUS mentions, in none perhaps more than his own; every line of which outweighs whole pages of such a rhetor as FAMIANUS STRADA. I single him out among the moderns, because he had the foolish presumption to censure TACITUS, and to write history himself: and your lordship will forgive this short excursion in honor of a favourite author.

WHAT a school of private and public virtue had been opened to us at the resurrection of letters, if the latter historians of the Roman commonwealth, and the first of the succeeding monarchy, had come down to us entire? The few that are come down, tho broken and imperfect, compose the best body of history that we have, nay the only body of ancient history that deserves to be an object of study. It

fails us indeed most at that remarkable and fatal period, where our reasonable curiosity is raised the highest. **LIVY** employed five and forty books to bring his history down to the end of the sixth century, and the breaking out of the third Punic war : but he employed ninety-five to bring it down from thence to the death of **DRUSUS**; that is, through the course of one hundred and twenty or thirty years. **APPIAN**, **DION CASSIUS**, and others, nay even **PLUTARCH** included, make us but poor amends for what is lost of **LIVY**. Among all the adventitious helps by which we endeavour to supply this loss in some degree, the best are those that we find scattered up and down in the works of **TULLY**. His orations particularly and his letters contain many curious anecdotes and instructive reflections, concerning the intrigues and machinations that were carried on against liberty, from **CATILINE**'s conspiracy to **CAESAR**'s. The state of the government, the constitution and temper of the several parties, and the characters of the principal persons who figured at that time on the public stage, are to be seen there in a stronger and truer light than they would have appeared perhaps if he had writ purposely on this subject, and even

even in those memorials which he somewhere promises ATTICUS to write. *Excudam aliquod Heraclidium opus, quod lateat in thesauris tuis.* He would hardly have unmasked in such a work, as freely as in familiar occasional letters, POMPEY, CATO, BRUTUS, nay himself; the four men of Rome, on whose praises he dwelt with the greatest complacency. The age in which LIVY flourished abounded with such materials as these: they were fresh, they were authentic; it was easy to procure them, it was safe to employ them: How he did employ them in executing the second part of his design, we may judge by his execution of the first: and I own to your lordship I should be glad to exchange, if it were possible, what we have of this history for what we have not. Would you not be glad, my lord, to see in one stupendous draught the whole progress of that government from liberty to servitude? the whole series of causes and effects, apparent and real, public and private? those which all men saw, and all good men lamented and opposed at the time; and those which were so disguised to the prejudices, to the partialities of a divided people, and even to the corruption of mankind, that many did not, and that

many could pretend they did not, discern them, till it was too late to resist them? I am sorry to say it, this part of the Roman story would be not only more curious and more authentic than the former, but of more immediate and more important application to the present state of Britain. But it is lost : the loss is irreparable, and your lordship will not blame me for deploring it.

III. THEY who set up for scepticism may not regret the loss of such an history : but this I will be bold to assert to them, that an history must be writ on this plan, and must aim at least at these perfections, or it will answer sufficiently none of the intentions of history. That it will not answer sufficiently the intention I have insisted upon in these letters, that of instructing posterity by the examples of former ages, is manifest : and I think it is as manifest that an history cannot be said even to relate faithfully, and inform us truly, that does not relate fully, and inform us of all that is necessary to make a true judgment concerning the matters contained in it. Naked facts, without the causes that produced them and the circumstances that accompanied them, are not sufficient to characterize  
actions



actions or counsels. The nice degrees of wisdom and of folly, of virtue and of vice, will not only be undiscoverable in them ; but we must be very often unable to determine under which of these characters they fall in general. The sceptics I am speaking of are therefore guilty of this absurdity : the nearer an history comes to the true idea of history, the better it informs and the more it instructs us, the more worthy to be rejected it appears to them. I have said and allowed enough to content any reasonable man about the uncertainty of history. I have owned that the best are defective, and I will add in this place an observation which did not, I think, occur to me before. Conjecture is not always distinguished perhaps as it ought to be ; so that an ingenious writer may sometimes do very innocently, what a malicious writer does very criminally as often as he dares, and as his malice requires it : he may account for events after they have happened, by a system of causes and conduct that did not really produce them, tho it might possibly or even probably have produced them. But this observation, like several others, becomes a reason for examining and comparing authorities, and for preferring some, not for

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rejecting all. DAVILA, a noble historian surely, and one whom I should not scruple to confess equal in many respects to LIVY, as I should not scruple to prefer his countryman GUICCIARDIN to THUCYDIDES in every respect ; DAVILA, my lord, was accused from the first publication of his history, or at least was suspected, of too much refinement and subtilty ; in developing the secret motives of actions, in laying the causes of events too deep, and deducing them often through a series of progression too complicated, and too artistly wrought. But yet the suspicious person who should reject this historian upon such general inducements as these, would have no grace to oppose his suspicions to the authority of the first duke of Epernon, who had been an actor, and a principal actor too, in many of the scenes that DAVILA recites. GIRARD, secretary to this duke and no contemptible biographer, relates, that this history came down to the place where the old man resided in Gascony, a little before his death ; that he read it to him, that the duke confirmed the truth of the narrations in it, and seemed only surprized by what means the author could be so well informed of the  
most

most secret councils and measures of those times?

IV. I HAVE said enough on this head, and your lordship may be induced perhaps, by what I have said, to think with me, that such histories as these, whether ancient or modern, deserve alone to be studied. Let us leave the credulous learned to write history without materials, or to study those who do so; to wrangle about ancient traditions, and to ring different changes on the same sett of bells. Let us leave the sceptics, in modern as well as ancient history, to triumph in the notable discovery of the ides of one month mistaken for the calends of another, or in the various dates and contradictory circumstances which they find in weekly gazettes and monthly mercuries. Whilst they are thus employed, your lordship and I will proceed, if you please, to consider more closely than we have yet done, the rule mentioned above; that I mean of using discernment and choice in the study of the most authentic history, that of not wandering in the light, which is as necessary as that of not groping in the dark.

MAN is the subject of every history; and to know him well, we must see him  
and

and consider him, as history alone can present him to us, in every age, in every country, in every state, in life and in death. History therefore of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of ancient and modern nations, in short all history, that descends to a sufficient detail of human actions and characters, is useful to bring us acquainted with our species, nay with ourselves. To teach and to inculcate the general principles of virtue, and the general rules of wisdom and good policy, which result from such details of actions and characters, comes for the most part, and always should come, expressly and directly into the design of those who are capable of giving such details: and therefore whilst they narrate as historians, they hint often as philosophers; they put into our hands, as it were, on every proper occasion, the end of a clue, that serves to remind us of searching, and to guide us in the search of that truth which the example before us either establishes or illustrates. If a writer neglects this part, we are able however to supply his neglect by our own attention and industry: and when he gives us a good history of Peruvians or Mexicans, of Chinese or Tartars, of Muscovites



Muscovites or Negroes, we may blame him, but we must blame ourselves much more, if we do not make it a good lesson, of philosophy, This being the general use of history, it is not to be neglected. Every one may make it, who is able to read and to reflect on what he reads : and every one who makes it will find, in his degree, the benefit that arises from an early acquaintance contracted in this manner with mankind. We are not only passengers or sojourners in this world, but we are absolute strangers at the first steps we make in it. Our guides are often ignorant, often unfaithful. By this map of the country which history spreads before us, we may learn, if we please, to guide ourselves. In our journey through it, we are beset on every side. We are besieged sometimes even in our strongest holds. Terrors and temptations, conducted by the passions of other men, assault us : and our own passions, that correspond with these, betray us. History is a collection of the journals of those who have travelled through the same country, and been exposed to the same accidents : and their good and their ill success are equally instructive. In this pursuit of knowledge an immense field is spread to us : general histories, sacred and prophane ;

prophane; the histories of particular countries, particular events, particular orders, particular men; memorials, anecdotes, travels. But we must not ramble in this field without discernment or choice, nor even with these must we ramble too long.

As to the choice of authors, who have writ on all these various subjects, so much has been said by learned men concerning all those that deserve attention, and their several characters are so well established, that it would be a sort of pedantic affectation to lead your lordship through so voluminous, and at the same time so easy, a detail. I pass it over therefore in order to observe, that as soon as we have taken this general view of mankind, and of the course of human affairs in different ages and different parts of the world; we ought to apply, and the shortness of human life considered, to confine ourselves almost entirely in our study of history, to such histories as have an immediate relation to our professions, or to our rank and situation in the society to which we belong. Let me instance in the profession of divinity, as the noblest and the most important.

(1) I HAVE

(1) I HAVE said so much concerning the share which divines of all religions have taken in the corruption of history, that I should have anathemas pronounced against me, no doubt, in the east and the west, by the dairo, the musti, and the pope, if these letters were submitted to ecclesiastical censure; for surely, my lord, the clergy have a better title than the sons of Apollo to be called *genus irritabile vatum*. What would it be, if I went about to shew, how many of the christian clergy abuse by mis-representation and false quotation, the history they can no longer corrupt? and yet this task would not be, even to me, an hard one. But as I mean to speak in this place of christian divines alone, so I mean to speak of such of them particularly as may be called divines without any sneer: of such of them, for some such I think there are, as believe themselves, and would have mankind believe; not for temporal but spiritual interest, not for the sake of the clergy, but for the sake of mankind. Now it has been long matter of astonishment to me, how such persons as these could take so much silly pains to establish mystery on metaphysics, revelation on philosophy, and matters of fact on abstract reasoning? A religion

religion founded on the authority of a divine mission, confirmed by prophecies and miracles, appeals to facts : and the facts must be proved as all other facts that pass for authentic are proved ; for faith, so reasonable after this proof, is absurd before it. If they are thus proved, the religion will prevail without the assistance of so much profound reasoning : if they are not thus proved, the authority of it will sink in the world even with this assistance. The divines object in their disputes with atheists, and they object very justly, that these men require improper proofs ; proofs that are not suited to the nature of the subject, and then cavil that such proofs are not furnished. But what then do they mean, to fall into the same absurdity themselves in their disputes with theists, and to din improper proofs in ears that are open to proper proofs ? The matter is of great moment, my lord, and I make no excuse for the zeal which obliges me to dwell a little on it. A serious and honest application to the study of ecclesiastical history, and every part of prophane history and chronology relative to it, is incumbent on such reverend persons as are here spoken of, on a double account : because history alone can furnish the proper



per proofs, that the religion they teach is of God ; and because the unfair manner, in which these proofs have been and are daily furnished, creates prejudices, and gives advantages against christianity that require to be removed. No scholar will dare to deny, that false history, as well as sham miracles, has been employed to propagate christianity formerly : and whoever examines the writers of our own age will find the same abuse of history continued. Many and many instances of this abuse might be produced. It is grown into custom, writers copy one another, and the mistake that was committed, or the falsehood that was invented by one, is adopted by hundreds.

ABBADIE says in his famous book, that the gospel of St. MATTHEW is cited by CLEMENS bishop of Rome, a disciple of the apostles ; that BARNABAS cites it in his epistle ; that IGNATIUS and POLYCARPE receive it ; and that the same fathers, that give testimony for MATTHEW, give it likewise for MARK. Nay your lordship will find, I believe, that the present bishop of London in his third pastoral letter speaks to the same effect. I will not trouble you nor myself with any more instances of the same kind.

Let

Let this which occurred to me as I was writing suffice. It may well suffice ; for I presume the fact advanced by the minister and the bishop is a mistake. If the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our evangelists, will it follow that these fathers had the same gospels before them ? To say so is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcusable in writers that knew, or should have known, that these fathers made use of other gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition. Besides which I could almost venture to affirm that these fathers of the first century do not expressly name the gospels we have of MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, and JOHN. To the two reasons that have been given why those who make divinity their profession should study history, particularly ecclesiastical history, with an honest and serious application ; in order to support christianity against the attacks of unbelievers, and to remove the doubts and prejudices that the unfair proceedings of men of their own order have raised in minds candid but not implicit, willing to be informed but curious to examine ;

mine ; to these I say we may add another consideration that seems to me of no small importance. Writers of the Roman religion have attempted to shew, that the text of the holy writ is on many accounts insufficient to be the sole criterion of orthodoxy : I apprehend too that they have shewn it. Sure I am that experience, from the first promulgation of christianity to this hour, shews abundantly with how much ease and success the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text ; and plausibly defended by the same authority. Writers of the reformed religion have erected their batteries against tradition ; and the only difficulty they had to encounter in this enterprize lay in levelling and pointing their cannon so as to avoid demolishing, in one common ruin, the traditions they retain, and those they reject. Each side has been employed to weaken the cause and explode the system of his adversary : and whilst they have been so employed, they have jointly laid their axes to the root of christianity : for thus men will be apt to reason upon what they have advanced,  
 “ If the text has not that authenticity,  
 “ clearness,

“ clearness, and precision which are necessary to establish it as a divine and a certain rule of faith and practice ; and if the tradition of the church, from the first ages of it till the days of LUTHER and CALVIN, has been corrupted itself, and has served to corrupt the faith and practice of christians ; there remains at this time no standard at all of christianity. By consequence either this religion was not originally of divine institution, or else God has not provided effectually for preserving the genuine purity of it, and the gates of hell have actually prevailed, in contradiction to his promise, against the church.” The best effect of this reasoning that can be hoped for, is that men should fall into theism, and subscribe to the first proposition : he must be worse than an atheist who can affirm the last. The dilemma is terrible, my lord. Party zeal and private interest have formed it : the common interest of christianity is deeply concerned to solve it. Now I presume it can never be solved without a more accurate examination, not only of the christian but of the jewish system, than learned men have been hitherto impartial enough and sagacious enough to take, or honest enough



nough to communicate. Whilst the authenticity and sense of the text of the bible remain as disputable, and whilst the tradition of the church remains as problematical, to say no worse, as the immense labours of the christian divines in several communions have made them appear to be ; christianity may lean on the civil and ecclesiastical power, and be supported by the forcible influence of education : but the proper force of religion, that force which subdues the mind and awes the conscience by conviction, will be wanting.

I HAD reason therefore to produce divinity, as one instance of those professions that require a particular application to the study of some particular parts of history : and since I have said so much on the subject in my zeal for christianity, I will add this further. The resurrection of letters was a fatal period : the christian system has been attacked and wounded too very severely since that time. The defence has been better made indeed by modern divines, than it had been by ancient fathers and apologists. The moderns have invented new methods of defence, and have abandoned some posts that were not tenable : but still there are others,

others, in defending which they lie under great disadvantages. Such are various facts, piously believed in former times, but on which the truth of christianity has been rested very imprudently in more enlightened ages ; because the falsity of some, and the gross improbability of others are so evident, that instead of answering the purpose for which they were invented, they have rendered the whole tenor of ecclesiastical history and tradition precarious, ever since a strict but just application of the rules of criticism has been made to them. I touch these things lightly ; but if your lordship reflects upon them, you will find reason perhaps to think as I do, that it is high time the clergy in all christian communions should join their forces, and establish those historical facts, which are the foundations of the whole system, on clear and unquestionable historical authority, such as they require in all cases of moment from others ; reject candidly what cannot be thus established ; and pursue their enquiries in the same spirit of truth through all the ages of the church ; without any regard to historians, fathers, or councils, more than they are strictly entitled to on the face of what they have transmitted to us, on their own consistency,

cy, and on the concurrence of their authority. Our pastors would be thus, I presume, much better employed than they generally are. Those of the clergy who make religion merely a trade, who regard nothing more than the subsistence it affords them, or in higher life the wealth and power they enjoy by the means of it, may say to themselves that it will last their time, or that policy and reason of state will preserve the form of a church when the spirit of religion is extinct. But those whom I mention above, those who act for spiritual not temporal ends, and are desirous that men should believe and practise the doctrines of christianity as well as go to church and pay tithes, will feel and own the weight of such considerations as these ; and agree that however the people have been and may be still amused, yet christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of letters : and that it cannot be supported as it was supported before that aera, nor by any other way than that which I propose, and which a due application to the study of history, chronology, and criticism, would enable our divines to pursue, no doubt, with success.

I MIGHT instance, in other professions, the obligation men lie under of applying themselves

themselves to certain parts of history, and I can hardly forbear doing it in that of the law ; in its nature the noblest and most beneficial to mankind, in its abuse and debasement the most fordid and the most pernicious. A lawyer now is nothing more, I speak of ninety-nine in an hundred at least, to use some of TULLY's words, *nisi leguleius quidam, cautus & acutus, praeco actionum, cantor formularum, auceps syllabarum*. But there have been lawyers that were orators, philosophers, historians: there have been BACONS and CLARENDONS, my lord. There will be none such any more, till in some better age, true ambition or the love of fame prevails over avarice ; and till men find leisure and encouragement to prepare themselves for the exercise of this profession, by climbing up to the *vantage ground*, so my lord BACON calls it, of science ; instead of groveling all their lives below, in a mean but gainful application to all the little arts of chicane. Till this happens, the profession of the law will scarce deserve to be ranked among the learned professions: and whenever it happens, one of the vantage grounds, to which men must climb, is metaphysical, and the other historical knowledge. They must



must pry into the secret recesses of the human heart, and become well acquainted with the whole moral world, that they may discover the abstract reason of all laws: and they must trace the laws of particular states, especially of their own, from the first rough sketches to the more perfect draughts; from the first causes or occasions that produced them, through all the effects good and bad that they produced. But I am running insensibly into a subject, which would detain me too long from one that relates more immediately to your lordship, and with which I intend to conclude this long letter.

(2) I pass from the consideration of those professions to which particular parts or kinds of history seem to belong: and I come to speak of the study of history, as a necessary mean to prepare men for the discharge of that duty which they owe to their country, and which is common to all the members of every society that is constituted according to the rules of right reason, and with a due regard to the common good. I have met in St. REAL's works, or some other French book, with a ridicule cast on private men who make history a political study, or who apply themselves in any manner to affairs of

state. But the reflection is too general. In governments so arbitrary by their constitution, that the will of the prince is not only the supreme but the sole law, it is so far from being a duty, that it may be dangerous, and must be impertinent in men, who are not called by the prince to the administration of public affairs, to concern themselves about it, or to fit themselves for it. The sole vocation there is the favour of the court; and whatever designation God makes by the talents he bestows, tho it may serve, which it seldom ever does, to direct the choice of the prince, yet I presume that it cannot become a reason to particular men, or create a duty on them, to devote themselves to the public service. Look on the Turkish government. See a fellow taken, from rowing in a common passage-boat, by the caprice of the prince: see him invested next day with all the power the foldans took under the caliphs, or the mayors of the palace under the successors of CLOVIS: see a whole empire governed by the ignorance, inexperience, and arbitrary will of this tyrant, and a few other subordinate tyrants, as ignorant and unexperienced as himself. In France indeed, tho an absolute government, things go a little better. Arts and sciences are encouraged, and here and there

there an example may be found of a man who has risen by some extraordinary talents, amidst innumerable examples of men who have arrived at the greatest honors and highest posts by no other merit than that of assiduous fawning, attendance, or of skill in some despicable puerile amusement; in training wasps, for instance, to take regular flights like hawks, and stoop at flies. The nobility of France, like the children of tribute among the ancient Saracens and modern Turks, are set apart for wars. They are bred to make love, to hunt, and to fight: and if any of them should acquire knowledge superior to this, they would acquire that which might be prejudicial to themselves, but could not become beneficial to their country. The affairs of state are trusted to other hands. Some have risen to them by drudging long in business: some have been made ministers almost in the cradle: and the whole power of the government has been abandoned to others in the dotage of life. There is a monarchy, an absolute monarchy too, I mean that of China, wherein the administration of the government is carried on, under the direction of the prince, ever since the dominion of the Tartars has been established, by several classes of Mandarins, and according to

the deliberation and advice of several orders of councils : the admission to which classes and orders depends on the abilities of the candidates, as their rise in them depends on the behaviour they hold, and the improvements they make afterwards. Under such a government, it is neither impertinent nor ridiculous, in any of the subjects who are invited by their circumstances, or pushed to it by their talents, to make the history of their own and of other countries a political study, and to fit themselves by this and all other ways for the service of the public. It is not dangerous neither ; or an honor that outweighs the danger attends it : since private men have a right by the ancient constitution of this government, as well as councils of state, to represent to the prince the abuses of his administration. But still men have not there the same occasion to concern themselves in the affairs of the state, as the nature of a free government gives to the members of it. In our own country, for in our own the forms of a free government at least are hitherto preserved, men are not only designed for the public service by the circumstances of their situation, and their talents, all which may happen in others : but they  
are



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are designed to it by their birth in many cases, and in all cases they may dedicate themselves to this service, and take in different degrees some share in it, whether they are called to it by the prince or no. In absolute governments, all public service is to the prince, and he nominates all those that serve the public. In free governments, there is a distinct and a principal service due to the state. Even the king, of such a limited monarchy as ours, is but the first servant of the people. Among his subjects, some are appointed by the constitution, and others are elected by the people, to carry on the exercise of the legislative power jointly with him, and to controul the executive power independently on him. Thus your lordship is born a member of that order of men, in whom a third part of the supreme power of the government resides : and your right to the exercise of the power belonging to this order not being yet opened, you are chosen into another body of men who have different power and a different constitution, but who possess another third part of the supreme legislative authority, for as long a time as the commission or trust delegated to them by the people lasts. Free-men who are neither

born to the first, nor elected to the last, have a right however to complain, to represent, to petition, and I add even to do more in cases of the utmost extremity. For sure there cannot be a greater absurdity, than to affirm that the people have a remedy in resistance, when their prince attempts to enslave them ; but that they have none, when their representatives sell themselves and them.

THE sum of what I have been saying is, that in free governments, the public service is not confined to those whom the prince appoints to different posts in the administration under him ; that there the care of the state is the care of multitudes ; that many are called to it in a particular manner by their rank, and by other circumstances of their situation ; and that even those whom the prince appoints are not only answerable to him, but like him, and before him, to the nation, for their behaviour in their several posts. It can never be impertinent nor ridiculous therefore in such a country, whatever it might be in the abbot of St. REAL's, which was Savoy I think ; or in Peru, under the INCAS, where GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA says it was lawful for none but the nobility to study---for men  
of

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of all degrees to instruct themselves, in those affairs wherein they may be actors, or judges of those that act, or controulers of those that judge. On the contrary, it is incumbent on every man to instruct himself, as well as the means and opportunities he has permit, concerning the nature and interests of the government, and those rights and duties that belong to him, or to his superiors, or to his inferiors. This in general; but in particular, it is certain that the obligations under which we lie to serve our country increase, in proportion to the ranks we hold, and the other circumstances of birth, fortune, and situation that call us to this service; and above all to the talents which God has given us to perform it.

It is in this view, that I shall address to your lordship whatever I have further to say on the study of history.

# LETTER VI.

*From what period modern history is peculiarly useful to the service of our country, viz.*

*From the end of the fifteenth century to the present.*

*The division of this into three particular periods :*

*In order to a sketch of the history and state of Europe from that time.*

SINCE then you are, my lord, by your birth, by the nature of our government, and by the talents God has given you, attached for life to the service of your country ; since genius alone cannot enable you to go through this service with honor to yourself and advantage to your country, whether you support or whether you oppose the administrations that arise ; since a great stock of knowledge, acquired betimes and continually improved, is necessary to this end ; and since one part of this stock must be collected from the study of history, as the  
other



other part is to be gained by observation and experience, I come now to speak to your lordship of such history as has an immediate relation to the great duty and business of your life, and of the method to be observed in this study. The notes I have by me, which were of some little use thus far, serve me no farther, and I have no books to consult. No matter ; I shall be able to explain my thoughts without their assistance, and less liable to be tedious. I hope to be as full and as exact on memory alone, as the manner in which I shall treat the subject requires me to be.

I SAY then, that however closely affairs are linked together in the progression of governments, and how much soever events that follow are dependant on those that precede, the whole connexion diminishes to sight as the chain lengthens ; till at last it seems to be broken, and the links that are continued from that point bear no proportion nor any similitude to the former. I would not be understood to speak only of those great changes, that are wrought by a concurrence of extraordinary events ; for instance the expulsion of one nation, the destruction of one government, and the esta-

blishment of another : but even of those that are wrought in the same governments and among the same people, slowly and almost imperceptibly, by the necessary effects of time, and flux condition of human affairs. When such changes as these happen in several states about the same time, and consequently affect other states by their vicinity, and by many different relations which they frequently bear to one another ; then is one of those periods formed, at which the chain spoken of is so broken as to have little or no real or visible connexion with that which we see continue. A new situation, different from the former, begets new interests in the same proportion of difference ; not in this or that particular state alone, but in all those that are concerned by vicinity or other relations, as I said just now, in one general system of policy. New interests beget new maxims of government, and new methods of conduct. These, in their turns, beget new manners, new habits, new customs. The longer this new constitution of affairs continues, the more will this difference increase ; and altho some analogy may remain long between what preceded and what succeeds such a period, yet will this  
this

this analogy soon become an object of mere curiosity, not of profitable enquiry. Such a period therefore is, in the true sense of the words, an epocha or an aera, a point of time at which you stop, or from which you reckon forward. I say forward; because we are not to study in the present case, as chronologers compute, backward. Should we persist to carry our researches much higher, and to push them even to some other period of the same kind, we should misemploy our time: the causes then laid having spent themselves, the series of effects derived from them being over, and our concern in both consequently at an end. But a new system of causes and effects, that subsists in our time, and whereof our conduct is to be a part, arising at the last period, and all that passes in our time being dependant on what has passed since that period, or being immediately relative to it, we are extremely concerned to be well informed about all those passages. To be entirely ignorant about the ages that precede this aera would be shameful. Nay some indulgence may be had to a temperate curiosity in the review of them. But to be learned about them is a ridiculous affectation in any man who  
means

means to be useful to the present age. Down to this aera let us read history : from this aera, and down to our own time, let us study it.

THE end of the fifteenth century seems to be just such a period as I have been describing, for those who live in the eighteenth, and who inhabit the western parts of Europe. A little before, or a little after this point of time, all those events happened, and all those revolutions began, that have produced so vast a change in the manners, customs, and interests of particular nations, and in the whole policy ecclesiastical and civil of these parts of the world. I must descend here into some detail, not of histories, collections, or memorials ; for all these are well enough known : and tho the contents are in the heads of few, the books are in the hands of many. But instead of shewing your lordship where to look, I shall contribute more to your entertainment and instruction, by marking out, as well as my memory will serve me to do it, what you are to look for, and by furnishing a kind of clue to your studies. I shall give, according to custom, the first place to religion.

A view



A view of the ecclesiastical government of Europe from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

OBSERVE then, my lord, that the demolition of the papal throne was not attempted with success till the beginning of the sixteenth century. If you are curious to cast your eyes back, you will find BERENGER in the eleventh, who was soon silenced; ARNOLDUS in the same, who was soon hanged; VALDO in the twelfth, and our WICKLIFF in the fourteenth, as well as others perhaps whom I do not recollect. Sometimes the doctrines of the church were alone attacked, and sometimes the doctrine, the discipline, and the usurpations of the pope. But little fires, kindled in corners of a dark world, were soon stifled by that great abettor of christian unity, the hang-man. When they spread and blazed out, as in the case of the Albigeois and of the Hussites, armies were raised to extinguish them by torrents of blood; and such saints as DOMINIC, with the crucifix in their hands, instigated the troops to the utmost barbarity. Your lordship will find

find that the Church of Rome was maintained by such charitable and salutary means, among others, till the period spoken of : and you will be curious, I am sure, to enquire how this period came to be more fatal to her than any former conjuncture ? A multitude of circumstances, which you will easily trace in the histories of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to go no further back, concurred to bring about this great event : and a multitude of others, as easy to be traced, concurred to hinder the demolition from becoming total, and to prop the tottering fabric. Among these circumstances, there is one less complicated and more obvious than others, which was of principal and universal influence. The art of printing had been invented about forty or fifty years before the period we fix : from that time, the resurrection of letters hastened on apace ; and at this period they had made great progress and were cultivated with great application. MAHOMET the second drove them out of the east into the west ; and the popes proved worse politicians than the musties in this respect. NICHOLAS the fifth encouraged learning and learned men. SIXTUS the fourth was, if I mistake

take not, a great collector of books at least : and LEO the tenth was the patron of every art and science. The magicians themselves broke the charm by which they had bound mankind for so many ages : and the adventure of that knight-errant, who, thinking himself happy in the arms of a celestial nymph, found that he was the miserable slave of an infernal hag, was in some sort renewed. As soon as the means of acquiring and spreading information grew common, it is no wonder that a system was unravelled, which could not have been woven with success in any ages, but those of gross ignorance and credulous superstition. I might point out to your lordship many other immediate causes, some general like this that I have mentioned, and some particular. The great schism, for instance, that ended in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and in the council of Constance, had occasioned prodigious scandal. Two or three vicars of CHRIST, two or three infallible heads of the church roaming about the world at a time, furnished matter of ridicule as well as scandal : and whilst they appealed, for so they did in effect, to the laity, and reproached and excommunicated one another,

another, they taught the world what to think of the institution as well as exercise of the papal authority. The same lesson was taught by the council of Pifa that preceded, and by that of Basle that followed the council of Constance. The horrid crimes of ALEXANDER the sixth, the sawcy ambition of JULIUS the second, the immense profusion and scandalous exactions of LEO the tenth ; all these events and characters, following in a continued series from the beginning of one century, prepared the way for the revolution that happened in the beginning of the next. The state of Germany, the state of England, and that of the North, were particular causes, in these several countries, of this revolution. Such were many remarkable events that happened about the same time, and a little before it, in these and in other nations ; and such were likewise the characters of many of the princes of that age, some of whom favoured the reformation like the elector of Saxony, on a principle of conscience, and most of whom favoured it, just as others opposed it, on a principle of interest. This your lordship will discover manifestly to have been the case ; and the sole difference  
you



you will find between HENRY the eighth and FRANCIS the first, one of whom separated from the pope as the other adhered to him, is this : HENRY the eighth divided, with the secular clergy and his people, the spoil of the pope, and his satellites, the monks : FRANCIS the first divided, with the pope, the spoil of his clergy, secular and regular, and of his people. With the same impartial eye that your lordship surveys the abuses of religion, and the corruptions of the church as well as court of Rome, which brought on the reformation at this period ; you will observe the characters and conduct of those who began, who propagated, and who favoured the reformation : and from your observation of these, as well as of the unsystematical manner in which it was carried on at the same time in various places, and of the want of concert, nay even of charity, among the reformers, you will learn what to think of the several religions that unite in their opposition to the Roman, and yet hate one another most heartily ; what to think of the several sects that have sprouted, like suckers, from the same great roots ; and what the true principles are of protestant ecclesiastical policy. This policy had no  
being

being till LUTHER made his establishment, in Germany; till ZWINGLIUS began another in Swisserland, which CALVIN carried on and, like AMERICUS VESPUTIUS, who followed CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, robbed the first adventurer of his honor; and till the reformation in our country was perfected under EDWARD the sixth and ELIZABETH. Even popish ecclesiastical policy is no longer the same since that aera. His holiness is no longer at the head of the whole western church: and to keep the part that adheres to him, he is obliged to loosen their chains, and to lighten his yoke. The spirit and pretensions of his court are the same, but not the power. He governs by expedient and management more, and by authority less. His decrees and his briefs are in danger of being refused; explained away, or evaded, unless he negociates their acceptance before he gives them, governs in concert with his flock, and feeds his sheep according to their humour and interest. In short, his excommunications, that made the greatest emperors tremble, are despised by the lowest members of his own communion; and the remaining attachment to him has been, from this aera, rather a political expedient to preserve an appearance  
of

of unity, than a principle of conscience; whatever some bigotted princes may have thought, whatever ambitious prelates and hireling scriblers may have taught, and whatever a people worked up to enthusiasm by fanatical preachers may have acted. Proofs of this would be easy to draw, not only from the conduct of such princes as FERDINAND the first and MAXIMILIAN the second, who could scarce be esteemed papists tho they continued in the pope's communion; but even from that of princes who persecuted their protestant subjects with great violence. Enough has been said, I think, to shew your lordship how little need there is of going up higher than the beginning of the sixteenth century in the study of history, to acquire all the knowledge necessary at this time in ecclesiastical policy, or in civil policy as far as it is relative to this. Historical monuments of this sort are in every man's hand, the facts are sufficiently verified, and the entire scenes lie open to our observation: even that scene of solemn refined banter exhibited in the council of Trent, imposes on no man who reads PAOLO, as well as PALLAVICINI, and the letters of VARGAS.

A view

A view of the civil government of Europe in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

I. In France.

A VERY little higher need we go, to observe those great changes in the civil constitutions of the principal nations of Europe, in the partition of power among them, and by consequence in the whole system of European policy, which have operated so strongly for more than two centuries, and which operate still. I will not affront the memory of our HENRY the seventh so much as to compare him to LEWIS the eleventh : and yet I perceive some resemblance between them ; which would perhaps appear greater, if PHILIP of Commines had wrote the history of HENRY as well as that of LEWIS ; or if my lord BACON had wrote that of LEWIS as well as that of HENRY. This prince came to the crown of England a little before the close of the fifteenth century : and LEWIS began his reign in France about twenty years sooner. These reigns make remarkable periods in the histories



histories of both nations. To reduce the power, privileges, and possessions of the nobility, and to increase the wealth and authority of the crown, was the principal object of both. In this their success was so great, that the constitutions of the two governments have had, since that time, more resemblance, in name and in form than in reality, to the constitutions that prevailed before. LEWIS the eleventh was the first, say the French, *qui mit les rois hors de page*. The independency of the nobility had rendered the state of his predecessors very dependant, and their power precarious. They were the sovereigns of great vassals; but these vassals were so powerful, that one of them was sometimes able, and two or three of them always to give law to the sovereign. Before LEWIS came to the crown, the English had been driven out of their possessions in France, by the poor character of HENRY the sixth, the domestic troubles of his reign, and the defection of the house of Burgundy from his alliance, much more than by the ability of CHARLES the seventh, who seems to have been neither a greater hero nor a greater politician than HENRY the sixth; and even than by the vigour and union of the French nobility in his service. After

LEWIS

LEWIS came to the crown, EDWARD the fourth, made a shew of carrying the war again into France; but he soon returned home, and your lordship will not be at a loss to find much better reasons for his doing so, in the situation of his affairs and the characters of his allies, than those which PHILIP of Commines draws from the artifice of LEWIS, from his good cheer and his pensions. Now from this time our pretensions on France were in effect given up: and CHARLES the bold, the last prince of the house of Burgundy, being killed, LEWIS had no vassal able to molest him. He re-united the dutchy of Burgundy and Artois to his crown, he acquired Provence by gift, and his son Britany by marriage: and thus France grew in the course of a few years into that great and compact body which we behold at this time. The history of France, before this period, is like that of Germany, a complicated history of several states and several interests; sometimes concurring like members of the same monarchy, and sometimes warring on one another. Since this period, the history of France is the history of one state under a more uniform and orderly government; the history of a monarchy wherein the prince is possessor of some, as well as lord of all the great

great sieges: and, the authority of many tyrants centring in one, tho' the people are not become more free, yet the whole system of domestic policy is entirely changed. Peace at home is better secured, and the nation grown fitter to carry war abroad. The governors of great provinces and of strong fortresses have opposed their king, and taken arms against his authority and commission since that time: but yet there is no more resemblance between the authority and pretensions of these governors, or the nature and occasions of these disputes, and the authority and pretensions of the vassals of the crown in former days, or the nature and occasions of these disputes with the prince and with one another, than there is between the ancient and the present peers of France. In a word, the constitution is so altered, that any knowledge we can acquire about it, in the history that precedes this period, will serve to little purpose in our study of the history that follows it, and to less purpose still in assisting us to judge of what passes in the present age. The kings of France since that time, more masters at home, have been able to exert themselves more abroad: and they began to do so immediately;

diately ; for CHARLES the eighth, son and successor of LEWIS the eleventh, formed great designs of foreign conquests, tho they were disappointed by his inability, by the levity of the nation, and by other causes. LEWIS the twelfth and FRANCIS the first, but especially FRANCIS, meddled deep in the affairs of Europe : and tho the superior genius of FERDINAND called the catholic, and the star of CHARLES the fifth prevailed against them, yet the efforts they made shew sufficiently how the strength and importance of this monarchy were increased in their time. From whence we may date likewise the rivalship of the house of France, for we may reckon that of Valois and that of Bourbon as one upon this occasion, and the house of Austria ; that continues at this day, and that has cost so much blood and so much treasure in the course of it.

## II. In England.

THO the power and influence of the nobility sunk in the great change that began under HENRY the seventh in England, as they did in that which began under LEWIS the eleventh in France ;  
yet



yet the new constitutions that these changes produced were very different. In France the lords alone lost, the king alone gained ; the clergy held their possessions and their immunities, and the people remained in a state of mitigated slavery. But in England the people gained as well as the crown. The commons had already a share in the legislature ; so that the power and influence of the lords being broke by HENRY the seventh, and the property of the commons increasing by the sale that his son made of church-lands, the power of the latter increased of course by this change in a constitution, the forms whereof were favourable to them. The union of the roses put an end to the civil wars of York and Lancaster, that had succeeded those we commonly call the barons wars : and the humor of warring in France, that had lasted near four hundred years under the Normans and Plantagenets, for plunder as well as conquest, was spent. Our temple of JANUS was shut by HENRY the seventh. We neither laid waste our own nor other countries any longer : and wise laws and a wise government changed insensibly the manners, and gave a new turn to the spirit, of our people. We

were no longer the free-booters we had been. Our nation maintained her reputation in arms whenever the public interest or the public authority required it; but war ceased to be, what it had been, our principal and almost our sole profession. The arts of peace prevailed among us. We became husbandmen, manufacturers, and merchants, and we emulated neighbouring nations in literature. It is from this time that we ought to study the history of our country, my lord, with the utmost application. We are not much concerned to know with critical accuracy what were the antient forms of our parliaments, concerning which however there is little room for dispute from the reign of HENRY the third at least; nor in short the whole system of our civil constitution before HENRY the seventh, and of our ecclesiastical constitution before HENRY the eighth. But he who has not studied and acquired a thorough knowledge of them both, from these periods down to the present time, in all the variety of events by which they have been affected, will be very unfit to judge or to take care of either. Just as little are we concerned to know, in any nice detail, what the conduct of our princes, relatively

relatively to their neighbours on the continent, was before this period, and at a time when the partition of power and a multitude of other circumstances rendered the whole political system of Europe so vastly different from that which has existed since. But he who has not traced this conduct from the period we fix, down to the present age, wants a principal part of the knowledge that every English minister of state should have. Ignorance in the respects here spoken of is the less pardonable, because we have more and more authentic means of information concerning this, than concerning any other period. Anecdotes enow to glut the curiosity of some persons, and to silence all the captious cavils of others, will never be furnished by any portion of history; nor indeed can they according to the nature and course of human affairs: but he who is content to read and observe, like a senator and a statesman, will find in our own and in foreign historians as much information as he wants, concerning the affairs of our island, her fortune at home and her conduct abroad, from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth. I refer to foreign historians, as well as to our own, for

this series of our own history; not only because it is reasonable to see in what manner the historians of other countries have related the transactions wherein we have been concerned, and what judgment they have made of our conduct domestic and foreign, but for another reason likewise. Our nation has furnished as ample and as important matter, good and bad, for history, as any nation under the sun: and yet we must yield the palm in writing history most certainly to the Italians and to the French, and I fear even to the Germans. The only two pieces of history we have, in any respect to be compared with the antient, are, the reign of HENRY the seventh by my lord BACON, and the history of our civil wars in the last century by your noble ancestor my lord chancellor CLARENDON. But we have no general history to be compared with some of other countries: neither have we, which I lament much more, particular histories, except the two I have mentioned, nor writers of memorials, nor collectors of monuments and anecdotes, to vie in number or in merit with those that foreign nations can boast; from COMMINES, GUICCIARDIN, DUBELLAY, PAOLO, DAVILA, THUANUS, and a multitude of others,  
down



down through the whole period that I propose to your lordship. But altho this be true to our shame: yet it is true likewise that we want no necessary means of information. They lie open to our industry and our discernment. Foreign writers are for the most part scarce worth reading when they speak of our domestic affairs; nor are our English writers for the most part of greater value when they speak of foreign affairs. In this mutual defect the writers of other countries are, I think, more excusable than ours: for the nature of our government, the political principles in which we are bred, our distinct interests as islanders, and the complicated various interests and humors of our parties, all these are so peculiar to ourselves, and so different from the notions, manners, and habits of other nations, that it is not wonderful they should be puzzled or should fall into error, when they undertake to give relations of events that result from all these, or to pass any judgment upon them. But as these historians are mutually defective, so they mutually supply each others defects. We must compare them therefore, make use of our discernment, and draw our conclusions from both. If we proceed in

this manner, we have an ample fund of history in our power, from whence to collect sufficient authentic information: and we must proceed in this manner, even with our own historians of different religions, sects, and parties, or run the risque of being misled by domestic ignorance and prejudice in this case, as well as by foreign ignorance and prejudice in the other.

### III. In Spain and the Empire.

SPAIN figured little in Europe till the latter part of the fifteenth century; till Castile and Arragon were united by the marriage of FERDINAND and ISABELLA; till the total expulsion of the Moors, and till the discovery of the West-Indies. After this, not only Spain took a new form, and grew into immense power; but, the heir of FERDINAND and ISABELLA, being heir likewise of the houses of Burgundy and Austria, such an extent of dominion accrued to him by all these successions, and such an addition of rank and authority by his election to the empire, as no prince had been master of in Europe from the days of CHARLES the great. It is proper to observe here how  
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the policy of the Germans altered in the choice of an emperor ; because the effects of this alteration have been great. When **RODOLPHUS** of Hapsburg was chose in the year one thousand two hundred and seventy, or about that time, the poverty and the low estate of this prince, who had been marshal of the court to a king of Bohemia, was an inducement to elect him. The disorderly and lawless state of the Empire made the princes of it in those days unwilling to have a more powerful head. But a contrary maxim took place at this aera : **CHARLES** the fifth and **FRANCIS** the first, the two most powerful princes of Europe, were the sole candidates ; for the elector of Saxony, who is said to have declined, was rather unable to stand in competition with them : and **CHARLES** was chosen by the unanimous suffrages of the electoral college, if I mistake not. Another **CHARLES**, **CHARLES** the fourth, who was made emperor illegally enough on the deposition of **LEWIS** of Bavaria, and about one hundred and fifty years before, seems to me to have contributed doubly to establish this maxim ; by the wise constitutions that he procured to pass, that united the empire in a more orderly form and bet-

ter system of government, and by alienating the imperial revenues to such a degree, that they were no longer sufficient to support an emperor who had not great revenues of his own. The same maxim and other circumstances have concurred to keep the empire in this family ever since, as it had been often before; and this family having large dominions in the empire and larger pretensions as well as dominions out of it, the other states of Europe, France, Spain and England particularly, have been more concerned since this period in the affairs of Germany than they were before it: and by consequence the history of Germany, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, is of importance, and a necessary part of that knowledge which your lordship desires to acquire.

THE Dutch commonwealth was not formed till near a century later. But as soon as it was formed, nay even whilst it was forming, these provinces that were lost to observation, among the many that composed the dominions of Burgundy and Austria, became so considerable a part of the political system of Europe, that their history must be studied by every man



man who would inform himself of this system.

Soon after this state had taken being, others of a more ancient original began to mingle in those disputes and wars, those councils, negotiations and treaties, that are to be the principal objects of your lordship's application in the study of history. That of the northern crowns deserves your attention little, before the last century. Till the election of **FREDERIC** the first to the crown of Denmark, and till that wonderful revolution which the first **GUSTAVUS** brought about in Sweden, it is nothing more than a confused rhapsody of events, in which the great kingdoms and states of Europe neither had any concern, nor took any part. From the time I have mentioned, the northern crowns have turned their counsels and their arms often southwards, and Sweden particularly with prodigious effect.

To what purpose should I trouble your lordship with the mention of histories of other nations? They are either such as have no relation to the knowledge you would acquire, like that of the Poles, the Muscovites, or the Turks; or they are such as, having an occasional or a se-

condary relation to it, fall of course into your scheme; like the history of Italy for instance, which is sometimes a part of that of France, sometimes of that of Spain, and sometimes of that of Germany. The thread of history, that you are to keep, is that of the nations who are and must always be concerned in the same scenes of action with your own. These are the principal nations of the west. Things that have no immediate relation to your own country, or to them, are either too remote, or too minute, to employ much of your time: and their history and your own is, for all your purposes, the whole history of Europe.

THE two great powers, that of France and that of Austria, being formed, and a rivalry established by consequence between them; it began to be the interest of their neighbours to oppose the strongest and most enterprizing of the two, and to be the ally and friend of the weakest. From hence arose the notion of a balance of power in Europe, on the equal poize of which the safety and tranquillity of all must depend. To destroy the equality of this balance has been the aim of each of these rivals in his turn: and to hinder it from being destroyed, by

by preventing too much power from falling into one scale, has been the principle of all the wise councils of Europe, relatively to France and to the house of Austria, through the whole period that began at the æra we have fixed, and subsists at this hour. To make a careful and just observation, therefore, of the rise and decline of these powers, in the two last centuries and in the present, of the projects which their ambition formed, of the means they employed to carry those projects on with success, of the means employed by others to defeat them, of the issue of all these endeavours in war and in negotiation, and particularly to bring your observations home to your own country and your own use; of the conduct that England held, to her honor or dishonor, to her advantage or disadvantage, in every one of the numerous and important conjunctures that happened---ought to be the principal subject of your lordship's attention in reading and reflecting on this part of modern history.

Now to this purpose you will find it of great use, my lord, when you have a general plan of the history in your mind, to go over the whole again in another method,

method, which I propose to be this. Divide the entire period into such particular periods as the general course of affairs will mark out to you sufficiently, by the rise of new conjunctures, of different schemes of conduct, and of different theatres of action. Examine this period of history as you would examine a tragedy or a comedy; that is, take first the idea or a general notion of the whole, and after that examine every act and every scene a-part. Consider them in themselves, and consider them relatively to one another. Read this history as you would that of any ancient period; but study it afterwards, as it would not be worth your while to study the other; nay as you could not have in your power the means of studying the other, if the study was really worth your while. The former part of this period abounds in great historians: and the latter part is so modern, that even tradition is authentic enough to supply the want of good history; if we are curious to enquire, and if we hearken to the living with the same impartiality and freedom of judgment as we read the dead: and he that does one will do the other. The whole period abounds in memorials, in collections of  
public



public acts and monuments, of private letters, and of treaties. All these must come into your plan of study, my lord: many not to be read through, but all to be consulted and compared. They must not lead you, I think, to your enquires, but your enquiries must lead you to them. By joining history and that which we call the *materia historica* together in this manner, and by drawing your information from both, your lordship will acquire not only that knowledge which many have in some degree, of the great transactions that have passed, and the great events that have happened in Europe during this period, and of their immediate and obvious causes and consequences; but your lordship will acquire a much superior knowledge, and such a one as very few men possess almost in any degree, a knowledge of the true political system of Europe during this time. You will see it in it's primitive principles, in the constitutions of governments, the situations of countries, their national and true interests, the characters and the religion of people, and other permanent circumstances. You will trace it through all its fluctuations, and observe how the objects vary seldom, but the means perpetually,

petually, according to the different characters of princes and of those who govern ; the different abilities of those who serve ; the course of accidents, and a multitude of other irregular and contingent circumstances.

THE particular periods into which the whole period should be divided, in my opinion, are these. 1. From the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. 2. From thence to the Pyrenean treaty. 3. From thence down to the present time.

YOUR lordship will find this division as apt and as proper, relatively to the particular histories of England, France, Spain, and Germany, the principal nations concerned, as it is relatively to the general history of Europe.

THE death of queen ELIZABETH, and the accession of king JAMES the first, made a vast alteration in the government of our nation at home, and in her conduct abroad, about the end of the first of these periods. The wars that religion occasioned, and ambition fomented, in France, through the reigns of FRANCIS the second, CHARLES the ninth, HENRY the third, and a part of HENRY the fourth, ended : and the furies of the league were  
crushed

crushed by this great prince, about the same time. PHILIP the second of Spain marks this period likewise by his death, and by the exhausted condition in which he left the monarchy he governed : which took the lead no longer in disturbing the peace of mankind, but acted a second part in abetting the bigotry and ambition of FERDINAND the second and the third. The thirty years war that devastated Germany did not begin till the eighteenth year of the seventeenth century, but the seeds of it were sowing some time before, and even at the end of the sixteenth. FERDINAND the first and MAXIMILIAN had shewn much lenity and moderation in the disputes and troubles that arose on account of religion. Under RODOLPHUS and MATTHIAS, as the succession of their cousin FERDINAND approached, the fires that were covered began to smother and to sparkle : and if the war did not begin with this century, the preparation for it, and the expectation of it did.

THE second period ends in one thousand six hundred and sixty, the year of the restoration of CHARLES the second to the throne of England ; when our civil wars and all the disorders which

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CROMWELL's usurpation had produced were over; and therefore a remarkable point of time, with respect to our country. It is no less remarkable with respect to Germany, Spain, and France.

As to Germany; the ambitious projects of the German branch of Austria had been entirely defeated, the peace of the empire had been restored, and almost a new constitution formed, or an old one revived, by the treaties of Westphalia; nay the imperial eagle was not only fallen, but her wings were clipped.

As to Spain; the Spanish branch was fallen as low twelve years afterwards, that is in the year one thousand six hundred and sixty. PHILIP the second left his successors a ruined monarchy. He left them something worse; he left them his example and his principles of government, founded in ambition, in pride, in ignorance, in bigotry, and all the pedantry of state. I have read some where or other, that the war of the Low Countries alone cost him, by his own confession, five hundred and sixty-four millions, a prodigious sum in what species soever he reckoned. PHILIP the third and PHILIP the fourth followed his example and his principles of government, at home and abroad. At home,  
there



there was much form, but no good order, no economy nor wisdom of policy in the state. The church continued to devour the state, and that monster the inquisition to dispeople the country; even more than perpetual war, and all the numerous colonies that Spain had sent to the West-Indies: for your lordship will find that PHILIP the third drove more than nine hundred thousand Moriscoes out of his dominions by one edict, with such circumstances of inhumanity in the execution of it, as Spaniards alone could exercise, and that tribunal, who had provoked this unhappy race to revolt, could alone approve. Abroad, the conduct of these princes was directed by the same wild spirit of ambition: rash in undertaking tho' slow to execute, and obstinate in pursuing tho' unable to succeed, they opened a new sluice to let out the little life and vigour that remained in their monarchy. PHILIP the second is said to have been piqued against his uncle FERDINAND, for refusing to yield the empire to him on the abdication of CHARLES the fifth. Certain it is, that as much as he loved to disturb the peace of mankind, and to meddle in every quarrel that had the appearance of supporting the Roman, and oppressing every other church, he meddled little in  
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the affairs of Germany. But FERDINAND and MAXIMILIAN dead, and the off-spring of MAXIMILIAN extinct, the kings of Spain espoused the interests of the other branch of their family, entertained remote views of ambition in favour of their own branch, even on that side, and made all the enterprizes of FERDINAND of Gratz, both before and after his elevation to the empire, the common cause of the house of Austria. What compleated their ruin was this: they knew not how to lose, nor when to yield. They acknowledged the independency of the Dutch commonwealth, and became the allies of their antient subjects at the treaty of Munster: but they would not forego their usurped claim on Portugal, and they persisted to carry on singly the war against France. Thus they were reduced to such a lowness of power as can hardly be paralleled in any other case: and PHILIP the fourth was obliged at last to conclude a peace, on terms repugnant to his inclination, to that of his people, to the interest of Spain, and to that of all Europe, in the Pyrenean treaty.

As to France; this aera of the entire fall of the Spanish power is likewise that from which we may reckon that France grew

grew as formidable as we have seen her to her neighbours in power and pretensions. HENRY the fourth meditated great designs, and prepared to act a great part in Europe in the very beginning of this period, when RAVAILLAC stabbed him. His designs died with him, and are rather guessed at than known; for surely those which his historian PÉREFIXE and the compilers of SULLY's memorials ascribe to him, of a christian commonwealth, divided into fifteen states, and of a senate to decide all differences, and to maintain this new constitution of Europe, are too chimerical to have been really his: but his general design of abasing the house of Austria, and establishing the superior power in that of Bourbon, was taken up about twenty years after his death by RICHELIEU, and was pursued by him and by MAZARIN with so much ability and success, that it was effected entirely by the treaties of Westphalia and by the Pyrenean treaty; that is, at the end of the second of those periods I have presumed to propose to your lordship.

WHEN the third, in which we now are, will end, and what circumstances will mark the end of it, I know not: but this I know, that the great events and revolutions,

tions, which have happened in the course of it, interest us still more nearly than those of the two precedent periods. I intended to have drawn up an elenchus or summary of the three, but I doubted on further reflection, whether my memory would enable me to do it with exactness enough: and I saw that if I was able to do it, the deduction would be immeasurably long. Something of this kind however it may be reasonable to attempt, in speaking of the last period: which may hereafter occasion a farther trouble to your lordship.

BUT to give you some breathing-time, I will postpone it at present, and am in the mean while,

My LORD,

Your, &c.

L E T-



## L E T T E R VII.

*A sketch of the state and history of Europe from the Pyrenean treaty in one thousand six hundred and fifty-nine, to the year one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight.*

**T**HE first observation I shall make on this third period of modern history is, that as the ambition of CHARLES the fifth, who united the whole formidable power of Austria in himself, and the restless temper, the cruelty and bigotry of PHILIP the second, were principally objects of the attention and sollicitude of the councils of Europe, in the first of these periods ; and as the ambition of FERDINAND the second, and the third, who aimed at nothing less than extirpating the protestant interest, and under that pretence subduing the liberties of Germany, were objects of the same kind in the second : so an opposition to the growing power of France, or to speak more properly to the exorbitant ambition of the house of Bourbon, has been the principal affair of Europe, during the greatest part of the present period. The design

design of aspiring to universal monarchy was imputed to CHARLES the fifth, as soon as he began to give proofs of his ambition and capacity. The same design was imputed to LEWIS the fourteenth, as soon as he began to feel his own strength, and the weakness of his neighbours. Neither of these princes was induced, I believe, by the flattery of his courtiers, or the apprehensions of his adversaries, to entertain so chimerical a design as this would have been, even in that false sense wherein the word universal is so often understood: and I mistake very much if either of them was of a character, or in circumstances, to undertake it. Both of them had strong desires to raise their families higher, and to extend their dominions farther; but neither of them had that bold and adventurous ambition which makes a conqueror and an hero. These apprehensions however were given wisely, and taken usefully. They cannot be given nor taken too soon when such powers as these arise; because when such powers as these are besieged as it were early, by the common policy and watchfulness of their neighbours, each of them may in his turn of strength fall forth, and gain a little ground;

ground ; but none of them will be able to push their conquests far, and much less to consummate the entire projects of their ambition. Besides the occasional opposition that was given to CHARLES the fifth by our HENRY the eighth, according to the different moods of humor he was in ; by the popes, according to the several turns of their private interest ; and by the princes of Germany, according to the occasions or pretences that religion or civil liberty furnished : he had from his first setting out a rival and an enemy in FRANCIS the first, who did not maintain his cause in forma pauperis, if I may use such an expression : as we have seen the house of Austria sue, in our days, for dominion at the gate of every palace in Europe. FRANCIS the first was the principal in his own quarrels, paid his own armies, fought his own battles ; and tho his valour alone did not hinder CHARLES the fifth from subduing all Europe, as BAYLE, a better philologer than politician, somewhere asserts, but a multitude of other circumstances easily to be traced in history ; yet he contributed by his victories, and even by his defeats, to waste the strength and check the course of that growing power. LEWIS the fourteenth

teenth had no rival of this kind in the house of Austria, nor indeed any Enemy of this importance to combat, till the prince of ORANGE became king of Great-Britain : and he had great advantages in many other respects, which it is necessary to consider in order to make a true judgment on the affairs of Europe from the year one thousand six hundred and sixty. You will discover the first of these advantages, and such as were productive of all the rest, in the conduct of RICHELIEU and of MAZARIN. RICHELIEU formed the great design, and laid the foundations : MAZARIN pursued the design, and raised the superstructure. If I do not deceive myself extremely, there are few passages in history that deserve your lordship's attention more than the conduct that the first and greatest of these ministers held, in laying the foundations I speak of. You will observe how he helped to embroil affairs on every side, and to keep the house of Austria at bay as it were ; how he entered into the quarrels of Italy against Spain, into that concerning the Valteline, and that concerning the succession of Mantua ; without engaging so deep as to divert him from another great object of his policy, subdu-  
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ing Rochelle and disarming the Huguenots. You will observe how he turned himself, after this was done, to stop the progress of FERDINAND in Germany. Whilst Spain fomented discontents at the court and disorders in the kingdom of France, by all possible means, even by taking engagements with the duke of Rohan, and for supporting the protestants; RICHELIEU abetted the same interest in Germany against FERDINAND; and in the Low Countries against Spain. The emperor was become almost the master in Germany. CHRISTIAN the fourth, king of Denmark, had been at the head of a league, wherein the United Provinces, Sweden, and lower Saxony entered to oppose his progress: but CHRISTIAN had been defeated by TILLY and VALSTEIN, and obliged to conclude a treaty at Lubec, where FERDINAND gave him the law. It was then that GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS, with whom RICHELIEU made an alliance, entered into this war and soon turned the fortune of it. The French minister had not yet engaged his master openly in the war; but when the Dutch grew impatient and threatened to renew their truce with Spain, unless France declared; when the king of Swe-

den was killed and the battle of Nordlingen lost; when Saxony had turned again to the Side of the emperor, and Brandenburg and so many others had followed this example, that Hesse almost alone persisted in the Swedish alliance: then RICHHELIEU engaged his master, and profited of every circumstance which the conjuncture afforded, to engage him with advantage. For first he had a double advantage by engaging so late: that of coming fresh into the quarrel against a wearied and almost exhausted enemy; and that of yielding to the impatience of his friends, who pressed by their necessities and by the want they had of France, gave this minister an opportunity of laying those claims and establishing those pretensions in all his treaties with Holland, Sweden, and the princes and states of the empire, on which he had projected the future aggrandisement of France. The manner in which he engaged, and the air that he gave to his engagement, were advantages of the second sort, advantages of reputation and credit; yet were these of no small moment in the course of the war, and operated strongly in favour of France as he designed they should; even after his death, and at and after the treaties

ties of Westphalia. He varnished ambition with the most plausible and popular pretences. The elector of Treves had put himself under the protection of France; and, if I remember right, he made this step when the emperor could not protect him against the Swedes, whom he had reason to apprehend. No matter, the governor of Luxemburg was ordered to surprize Treves and to seize the elector. He executed his orders with success, and carried this prince prisoner into Brabant. RICHELIEU seized the lucky circumstance; he reclaimed the elector; and, on the refusal of the cardinal Infant, the war was declared. France, you see, appeared the common friend of liberty, the defender of it in the Low Countries against the king of Spain, and in Germany against the emperor, as well as the protector of the princes of the empire, many of whose states had been illegally invaded, and whose persons were no longer safe from violence even in their own palaces. All these appearances were kept up in the negotiations at Munster, where MAZARIN reaped what RICHELIEU had sowed. The demands that France made for herself were very great; but the conjuncture was favourable, and

she improved it to the utmost. No figure could be more flattering than her's, at the head of these negotiations ; nor more mortifying than the emperor's through the whole course of the treaty. The princes and states of the empire had been treated as vassals by the emperor : France determined them to treat with him on this occasion as sovereigns, and supported them in this determination. Whilst Sweden seemed concerned for the protestant interest alone, and shewed no other regard as she had no other alliance ; France affected to be impartial, alike to the protestant and to the papist, and to have no interest at heart but the common interest of the Germanic body. Her demands were excessive, but they were to be satisfied principally out of the emperor's patrimonial dominions. It had been the art of her ministers to establish this general maxim on many particular experiences, that the grandeur of France was a real, and would be a constant security to the rights and liberties of the empire against the emperor : and it is no wonder therefore, this maxim prevailing, injuries, resentments and jealousies being fresh on one side, and services, obligations and confidence on the other, that the Germans,



mans were not unwilling France should extend her empire on this side of the Rhine, whilst Sweden did the same on this side of the Baltic. These treaties, and the immense credit and influence that France had acquired by them in the empire, put it out of the power of one branch of the house of Austria to return the obligations of assistance to the other, in the war that continued between France and Spain, till the Pyrenean treaty. By this treaty the superiority of the house of Bourbon over the house of Austria was not only completed and confirmed, but the great design of uniting the Spanish and the French monarchies under the former was laid.

THE third period therefore begins by a great change of the balance of power in Europe, and by the prospect of one much greater and more fatal. Before I descend into the particulars I intend to mention, of the course of affairs, and of the political conduct of the great powers of Europe in this third period; give me leave to cast my eyes once more back on the second. The reflection I am going to make seems to me important, and leads to all that is to follow.

THE Dutch made their peace separately at Munster with Spain, who acknowledged then the sovereignty and independency of their commonwealth. The French, who had been, after our ELIZABETH, their principal support, reproached them severely for this breach of faith. They excused themselves in the best manner, and by the best reasons, they could. All this your lordship will find in the monuments of that time. But I think it not improbable that they had a motive you will not find there, and which it was not proper to give as a reason or excuse to the French. Might not the wise men amongst them consider even then, besides the immediate advantages that accrued by this treaty to their commonwealth, that the imperial power was fallen: that the power of Spain was vastly reduced; that the house of Austria was nothing more than the shadow of a great name, and that the house of Bourbon was advancing, by large strides, to a degree of power as exorbitant, and as formidable as that of the other family had been in the hands of CHARLES the fifth, of PHILIP the second, and lately of the two FERDINANDS? Might they not foresee even then what happened in the course

course of very few years, when they were obliged for their own security to assist their old enemies the Spaniards against their old friends the French? I think they might. Our CHARLES the first was no great politician, and yet he seemed to discern that the balance of power was turning in favour of France, some years before the treaties of Westphalia. He refused to be neuter, and threatened to take part with Spain, if the French pursued the design of besieging Dunkirk and Graveline, according to a concert taken between them and the Dutch, and in pursuance of a treaty for dividing the Spanish Low Countries, which RICHELIEU had negotiated. CROMWELL either did not discern this turn of the balance of power, long afterwards when it was much more visible; or, discerning it, he was induced by reasons of private interest to act against the general interest of Europe. CROMWELL joined with France against Spain, and tho he got Jamaica and Dunkirk, he drove the Spaniards into a necessity of making a peace with France, that has disturbed the peace of the world almost fourscore years, and the consequences of which have well-nigh beggared in our

times the nation he enslaved in his. There is a tradition, I have heard it from persons who lived in those days, and I believe it came from THURLO, that CROMWELL was in treaty with Spain, and ready to turn his arms against France when he died. If this fact was certain, as little as I honor his memory, I should have some regret that he died so soon. But whatever his intentions were, we must charge the Pyrenean treaty, and the fatal consequences of it, in great measure to his account. The Spaniards abhorred the thought of marrying their Infanta to LEWIS the fourteenth. It was on this point that they broke the negotiation LIONNE had begun : and your lordship will perceive, that if they resumed it afterwards, and offered the marriage they had before rejected, CROMWELL'S league with France was a principal inducement to this alteration of their resolutions.

THE precise point at which the scales of power turn, like that of the solstice in either tropic, is imperceptible to common observation : and, in one case as in the other, some progress must be made in the new direction, before the change is perceived. They who are in the sinking scale, for in the political balance of power,



power, unlike to all others, the scale that is empty sinks, and that which is full rises; they who are in the sinking scale do not easily come off from the habitual prejudices of superior wealth or power, or skill or courage, nor from the confidence that these prejudices inspire. They who are in the rising scale do not immediately feel their strength, nor assume that confidence in it which successful experience gives them afterwards. They who are the most concerned to watch the variations of this balance, misjudge often in the same manner, and from the same prejudices. They continue to dread a power no longer able to hurt them, or they continue to have no apprehensions of a power that grows daily more formidable. Spain verified the first observation at the end of the second period, when proud and poor, and enterprising and feeble, she still thought herself a match for France. France verified the second observation at the beginning of the third period, when the triple alliance stopped the progress of her arms, which alliances much more considerable were not able to effect afterwards. The other principal powers of Europe, in their turns, have verified the third observa-

tion in both its parts, through the whole course of this period.

WHEN LEWIS the fourteenth took the administration of affairs into his own hands, about the year one thousand six hundred and sixty, he was in the prime of his age, and had what princes seldom have, the advantages of youth and those of experience together. Their education is generally bad; for which reason royal birth, that gives a right to the throne among other people, gave an absolute exclusion from it among the Mamalukes. His was in all respects, except one, as bad as that of other princes. He jested sometimes on his own ignorance, and there were other defects in his character owing to his education, which he did not see. But MAZARIN had initiated him betimes in the mysteries of his policy. He had seen a great part of those foundations laid, on which he was to raise the fabric of his future grandeur; and as MAZARIN finished the work that RICHELIEU began, he had the lessons of one, and the examples of both, to instruct him. He had acquired habits of secrecy and method, in business; of reserve, discretion, decency and dignity, in behaviour. If he was not the greatest king, he was the best actor of majesty at least

least that ever filled a throne. He by no means wanted that courage which is commonly called bravery, tho the want of it was imputed to him in the midst of his greatest triumphs: nor that other courage, less ostentatious and more rarely found, calm, steady, persevering resolution; which seems to arise less from the temper of the body, and is therefore called courage of the mind. He had them both most certainly, and I could produce unquestionable anecdotes in proof. He was in one word much superior to any prince with whom he had to do, when he began to govern. He was surrounded with great captains bred in former wars, and with great ministers bred in the same school as himself. They who had worked under MAZARIN, worked on the same plan under him; and as they had the advantages of genius and experience over most of the ministers of other countries, so they had another advantage over those who were equal or superior to them: the advantage of serving a master whose absolute power was established; and the advantage of a situation wherein they might exert their whole capacity without contradiction; over that, for instance, wherein your lordship's great grand-father

ther was placed, at the same time in England, and JOHN DE WIT in Holland. Among these ministers, COLBERT must be mentioned particularly upon this occasioned; because it was he who improved the wealth, and consequently the power of France extremely, by the order he put into the finances, and by the encouragement he gave to trade and manufactures. The soil, the climate, the situation of France, the ingenuity, the industry, the vivacity of her inhabitants are such; she has so little want of the product of other countries, and other countries have so many real or imaginary wants to be supplied by her; that when she is not at war with all her neighbours, when her domestic quiet is preserved and any tolerable administration of government prevails, she must grow rich at the expence of those who trade, and even of those who do not open a trade, with her. Her bawbles, her modes, the follies and extravagancies of her luxury, cost England, about the time we are speaking of, little less than eight hundred thousand pounds sterling a year, and other nations in their proportions. COLBERT made the most of all these advantageous circumstances, and whilst he filled the national



tional sponge, he taught his successors how to squeeze it; a secret that he repented having discovered, they say, when he saw the immense sums that were necessary to supply the growing magnificence of his master.

THIS was the character of LEWIS the fourteenth, and this was the state of his kingdom at the beginning of the present period. If his power was great, his pretensions were still greater. He had renounced, and the infant with his consent had renounced, all right to the succession of Spain, in the strongest terms that the precaution of the councils of Madrid could contrive. No matter; he consented to these renunciations, but your lordship will find by the letters of MAZARIN and by other memorials, that he acted on the contrary principle, from the first, which he avowed soon afterwards. Such a power, and such pretensions, should have given, one would think, an immediate alarm to the rest of Europe. PHILIP the fourth was broken and decayed, like the monarchy he governed. One of his sons died, as I remember, during the negotiations that preceded the year one thousand six hundred and sixty: and the survivor, who was CHARLES the second,

second, rather languished than lived from the cradle to the grave. So dangerous a contingency, therefore, as the union of the two monarchies of France and Spain being in view forty years together; one would imagine, that the principal powers of Europe had the means of preventing it constantly in view during the same time. But it was otherwise. France acted very systematically from the year one thousand six hundred and sixty, to the death of king CHARLES the second of Spain. She never lost sight of her great object, the succession to the whole Spanish monarchy; and she accepted the will of the king of Spain in favour of the duke of Anjou. As she never lost sight of her great object during this time, so she lost no opportunity of increasing her power, while she waited for that of succeeding in her pretensions. The two branches of Austria were in no condition of making a considerable opposition to her designs and attempts. Holland, who of all other powers was the most concerned to oppose them, was at that time under two influences that hindered her from pursuing her true interest. Her true interest was to have used her utmost endeavours to unite closely and intimately with England on the restoration of king CHARLES.

CHARLES II. She did the very contrary. JOHN DE WIT, at the head of the Louvestein faction, governed. The interest of his party was to keep the house of Orange down : he courted therefore the friendship of France, and neglected that of England. The alliance between our nation and the Dutch was renewed, I think, in one thousand six hundred and sixty-two ; but the latter had made a defensive league with France a little before, on the supposition principally of a war with England. The war became inevitable very soon. CROMWELL had chastised them for their usurpations in trade and the outrages and cruelties they had committed ; but he had not cured them. The same spirit continued in the Dutch, the same resentments in the English : and the pique of merchants became the pique of nations. France entered into the war on the side of Holland ; but the little assistance she gave the Dutch shewed plain enough that her intention was to make these two powers waste their strength against one another, whilst she extended her conquests in the Spanish Low Countries. Her invasion of these provinces obliged DE WIT to change his Conduct. Hitherto he had been attached to France in  
the

the closest manner, had led his republic to serve all the purposes of France, and had renewed with the marshal D'ESTRADES a project of dividing the Spanish Netherlands between France and Holland, that had been taken up formerly, when RICHELIEU made use of it to flatter their ambition, and to engage them to prolong the war against Spain. A project not unlike to that which was held out to them by the famous preliminaries, and the extravagant barrier-treaty, in one thousand seven hundred and nine; and which engaged them to continue a war on the principle of ambition, into which they had entered with more reasonable and more moderate views.

As the private interests of the two DE WITS hindered that common-wealth from being on her guard, as early as she ought to have been against France; so the mistaken policy of the court of England, and the short views, and the profuse temper of the prince who governed, gave great advantages to LEWIS the fourteenth in the pursuit of his designs. He bought Dunkirk: and your lordship knows how great a clamour was raised on that occasion against your noble ancestor; as if he alone had been answerable for the measure, and  
his



his interest had been concerned in it. I have heard our late friend Mr. GEORGE CLARK quote a witness, who was quite unexceptionable, but I cannot recal his name at present, who many years after all these transactions, and the death of my lord CLARENDON, affirmed, that the earl of Sandwich had owned to him, that he himself gave his opinion among many others, officers, and ministers, for selling Dunkirk. Their reasons could not be good, I presume to say; but several that might be plausible at that time are easily guessed. A Prince like King CHARLES, who would have made as many bad bargains as any young spendthrift for money, finding himself thus backed, we may assure ourselves was peremptorily determined to sell: and whatever your great grandfather's opinion was, this I am able to pronounce upon my own experience, that his treaty for the sale is no proof he was of opinion to sell. When the resolution of selling was once taken, to whom could the sale be made? to the Dutch? No. This measure would have been at least as impolitic, and in that moment perhaps more odious than the other. To the Spaniards? They were unable to buy: and as low as their power was sunk, the principle

principle of opposing it still prevailed. I have sometimes thought that the Spaniards, who were forced to make peace with Portugal and to renounce all claim to that crown, four or five years afterwards, might have been induced to take this resolution then ; if the regaining Dunkirk without any expence had been a condition proposed to them : and that the Portuguese, who, notwithstanding their alliance with England and the indirect succours that France afforded them, were little able, after the treaty especially, to support a war against Spain, might have been induced to pay the price of Dunkirk ; for so great an advantage as immediate peace with Spain, and the extinction of all foreign pretences on their crown. But this speculation, concerning events so long ago passed, is not much to the purpose here. I proceed therefore to observe that notwithstanding the sale of Dunkirk, and the secret leanings of our court to that of France, yet England was first to take the alarm, when LEWIS the fourteenth invaded the Spanish Netherlands in one thousand six hundred and sixty seven : and the triple alliance was the work of an English Minister.

ster. It was time to take this alarm, for  
 from the moment that the king of France  
 claimed a right to the county of Burgun-  
 dy, the dutchy of Brabant, and other  
 portions of the low countries, as devol-  
 ved on his queen by the death of her fa-  
 ther PHILIP the fourth, he pulled off  
 the mask entirely. Volumes were writ  
 to establish, and to refute this suppo-  
 sed right. Your lordship no doubt  
 will look into a controversy that has  
 employed so many pens and so many  
 swords; and I believe you will think  
 it was sufficiently bold in the French,  
 to argue from customs, that regula-  
 ted the course of private successions in  
 certain provinces, to a right of succeed-  
 ing to the sovereignty of those pro-  
 vinces: and to assert the divisibility of  
 the Spanish monarchy, with the same  
 breath with which they asserted the in-  
 divisibility of their own; altho the  
 proofs in one case were just as good as  
 the proofs in the other, and the fun-  
 damental law of indivisibility was at  
 least as good a law in Spain, as either  
 this or the salique law was in France.  
 But however proper it might be for  
 the French and Austrian pens to enter  
 into

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into long discussions, and to appeal on  
this great occasion to the rest of Eu-  
rope; the rest of Europe had a short  
objection to make to the plea of France,  
which no sophisms, no quirks of law  
could evade. Spain accepted the re-  
nunciations as a real security: France  
gave them as such to Spain, and in effect  
to the rest of Europe. If they had not  
been thus given and thus taken, the Spa-  
niards would not have married their In-  
fanta to the king of France, whatever  
distress they might have endured by the  
prolongation of the war. These renun-  
ciations were renunciations of all rights  
whatsoever to the whole Spanish monar-  
chy, and to every part of it. The pro-  
vinces claimed by France at this time  
were parts of it. To claim them, was  
therefore to claim the whole; for if the  
renunciations were no bar to the rights  
accruing to MARY THERESA on the death  
of her father PHILIP the fourth, neither  
could they be any to the rights that would  
accrue to her and her children, on the  
death of her brother CHARLES the se-  
cond: an unhealthful youth, and who  
at this instant was in immediate danger  
of dying; for to all the complicated di-  
stempers



stempers he brought into the world with him, the small-pox was added. Your lordship sees how the fatal contingency of uniting the two monarchies of France and Spain stared mankind in the face; and yet nothing that I can remember was done to prevent it: not so much as a guaranty given, or a declaration made, to assert the validity of these renunciations, and for securing the effect of them. The triple alliance indeed stopped the progress of the French arms, and produced the treaty of Aix la Chapelle. But England, Sweden, and Holland, the contracting powers in this alliance, seemed to look, and probably did look, no farther. France kept a great and important part of what she had surprized, or ravished, or purchased; for we cannot say with any propriety that she conquered: and the Spaniards were obliged to set all they saved to the account of gain. The German branch of Austria had been reduced very low in power and in credit under FERDINAND the third, by the treaties of Westphalia, as I have said already. LEWIS the fourteenth maintained, during many years, the influence these treaties had given him among the princes and states

states of the empire. The famous capitulation made at Frankfort on the election of LEOPOLD, who succeeded FERDINAND about the year one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, was encouraged by the intrigues of France: and the power of France was looked upon as the sole power that could ratify and secure effectually the observation of the conditions then made. The league of the Rhine was not renewed I believe after the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-six; but tho this league was not renewed, yet some of these princes and states continued in their old engagements with France: whilst others took new engagements on particular occasions, according as private and sometimes very paltry interests, and the emissaries of France in all their little courts, disposed them. In short the princes of Germany shewed no alarm at the growing ambition and power of LEWIS the fourteenth, but contributed to encourage one, and to confirm the other. In such a state of things the German branch was little able to assist the Spanish branch against France, either in the war that ended by the Pyrenean treaty, or in that we are speaking of here, the short war that began in one thousand

thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, and was ended by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in one thousand six hundred and sixty-eight. But it was not this alone that disabled the Emperor from acting with vigour in the cause of his family then, nor that has rendered the house of Austria a dead weight upon all her allies ever since. Bigotry, and its inseparable companion, cruelty, as well as the tyranny and avarice of the court of Vienna, created in those days, and has maintained in ours, almost a perpetual diversion of the imperial arms from all effectual opposition to France. I mean to speak of the troubles in Hungary. Whatever they became in their progress, they were caused originally by the usurpations and persecutions of the emperor: and when the Hungarians were called rebels first, they were called so for no other reason than this, that they would not be slaves. The dominion of the emperor being less supportable than that of the Turks, this unhappy people opened a door to the latter to infect the empire, instead of making their country what it had been before, a barrier against the Ottoman power. France became a sure, tho secret ally of the Turks, as well as the Hungarians, and

and has found her account in it, by keeping the emperor in perpetual alarms on that side, while he has ravaged the empire and the Low Countries on the other. Thus we saw, thirty-two years ago, the arms of France and Bavaria in possession of Passau, and the malcontents of Hungary in the suburbs of Vienna. In a word, when LEWIS the fourteenth made the first essay of his power, by the war of one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, and founded as it were the councils of Europe concerning his pretensions on the Spanish succession, he found his power to be great beyond what his neighbours or even he perhaps thought it: great by the wealth, and greater by the united spirit of his people; greater still by the ill policy, and divided interests that governed those who had a superior common interest to oppose him. He found that the members of the triple alliance did not see, or seeing did not think proper to own that they saw, the injustice, and the consequence of his pretensions. They contented themselves to give to Spain an act of guaranty for securing the execution of the treaty of Aix la Chapelle. He knew even then how ill the guaranty would be observed by



by two of them at least, by England and by Sweden. The treaty itself was nothing more than a composition between the bully and the bullied. Tournay, and Lisle, and Doway, and other places that I have forgot, were yielded to him: and he restored the county of Burgundy, according to the option, that Spain made against the interest and the expectation too of the Dutch, when an option was forced upon her. The king of Spain compounded for his possession: but the emperor compounded at the same time for his succession, by a private eventual treaty of partition, which the commander of Gremonville, and the count of Aversberg signed at Vienna. The same LEOPOLD, who exclaimed so loudly in one thousand six hundred and ninety eight against any partition of the Spanish monarchy, and refused to submit to that which England and Holland had then made, made one himself in one thousand six hundred and sixty eight, with so little regard to these two powers that the whole ten provinces were thrown into the lot of France.

THERE is no room to wonder if such experience as LEWIS the fourteenth had upon this occasion, and such a face of af-

Affairs in Europe, raising his hopes, raised  
 his ambition; and if, in making Peace at  
 Aix la Chapelle, he meditated a new  
 war, the war of one thousand six hun-  
 dred and seventy two; the preparations  
 he made for it by negotiations in all  
 parts, by alliances wherever he found in-  
 gression, and by the increase of his for-  
 ces, were equally proofs of ability, in-  
 dustry and power. I shall not descend  
 into these particulars: your lordship will  
 find them pretty well detailed in the me-  
 morials of that time. But one of the al-  
 liances he made must mention, tho I  
 mention it with the utmost regret and  
 indignation. England was fatally en-  
 gaged to act a part in this conspiracy a-  
 gainst the peace and the liberty of Eu-  
 rope: nay, against her own peace and  
 her own liberty; for a bubble's part it  
 was, equally wicked and impolitic. For-  
 give the terms I use, my lord: none can  
 be too strong. The principles of the  
 triple alliance, just and wise, and worthy  
 of a king of England, were laid aside.  
 Then, the progress of the French arms  
 was to be checked, the ten provinces  
 were to be saved, and by saving them  
 the barrier of Holland was to be preser-  
 ved. Now we joined our councils and

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our arms to those of France, on a project that could not be carried on at all, as it was easy to foresee and as the event shewed, unless it was carried on against Spain, the emperor, and most of the princes of Germany, as well as the Dutch: and which could not be carried on successfully, without leaving the ten provinces entirely at the mercy of France, and giving her pretence and opportunity of ravaging the empire, and extending her conquests on the Rhine. The medal of VAN BEUNINGHEN, and other pretences that France took for attacking the states of the low countries, were ridiculous. They imposed on no one: and the true object of LEWIS the fourteenth was manifest to all. But what could a king of England mean? CHARLES the second had reasons of resentment against the Dutch, and just ones too no doubt. Among the rest, it was not easy for him to forget the affront he had suffered and the loss he had sustained, when, depending on the peace that was ready to be signed, and that was signed at Breda in July, he neglected to fit out his fleet: and when that of Holland, commanded by RUYTER, with CORNELIUS DE WIT on board as deputy or commissioner of the states,

burnt his ships at Chatham in June. The famous perpetual edict, as it was called but did not prove in the event, against the election of a state-holder, which JOHN DE WIT promoted, carried, and obliged the prince of Orange to swear to maintain a very few days after the conclusion of the peace at Breda, might be another motive in the breast of king CHARLES the second; as it was certainly a pretence of revenge on the Dutch, or at least on the DE WITS and the Louvestein faction that ruled almost despotically in that common-wealth. But it is plain that neither these reasons, nor others of a more antient date, determined him to this alliance with France; since he contracted the triple alliance within four or five months after the two events, I have mentioned, happened. What then did he mean? Did he mean to acquire one of the seven provinces, and divide them, as the Dutch had twice treated for the division of the ten, with France? I believe not; but this I believe, that his inclinations were favourable to the popish interest in general, and that he meant to make himself more absolute at home: that he thought it necessary to this end to humble the Dutch, to reduce their power; and perhaps to change



change the form of their government; to deprive his subjects of the correspondence with a neighbouring protestant and free state, and of all hope of succour and support from thence in their opposition to him: in a word to abett the designs of France on the continent, that France might abett his designs on his own kingdom. This I say I believe, and this I should venture to affirm; if I had in my hands to produce, and was at liberty to quore, the private relations I have red formerly, drawn up by those who were no enemies to such designs, and on the authority of those who were parties to them. But whatever king CHARLES the second meant, certain it is, that his conduct established the superiority of France in Europe.

BUT this charge however must not be confined to him alone. Those who were nearer the danger, those who were exposed to the immediate attacks of France, and even those who were her rivals for the same succession, having either assisted her, or engaged to remain neutrals. A strange fatality prevailed, and produced such a conjuncture as can hardly be parallellled in history. Your lordship will observe with astonishment, even in the

beginning of the year one thousand six hundred and seventy two, all the neighbours of France acting as if they had nothing to fear from her, and some as if they had much to hope, by helping her to oppress the Dutch and sharing with her the spoils of that common-wealth. *Delenda est Carthago*, was the cry in England, and seemed too a maxim on the continent.

In the course of the same year, you will observe that all these powers took the alarm, and began to unite in opposition to France. Even England thought it time to interpose in favour of the Dutch. The consequences of this alarm, of this sudden turn in the policy of Europe, and of that which happened by the massacre of the *De Wits*, and the elevation of the prince of Orange in the government of the seven provinces, saved these provinces, and stopped the rapid progress of the arms of France. *Lewis* the fourteenth indeed surprised the seven provinces in this war, as he had surprised the ten in that of one thousand six hundred and sixty seven, and ravaged defenceless countries with armies sufficient to conquer them, if they had been prepared to resist. In the war of one thousand six hundred and seventy

venty two, he had little less than one hundred and fifty thousand men on foot, besides the bodies of English, Swiss, Italians, and Swedes, that amounted to thirty or forty thousand more. With this mighty force he took forty places in forty days, imposed extravagant conditions of peace, played the monarch a little while at Utrecht; and as soon as the Dutch recovered from their consternation, and, animated by the example of the prince of Orange and the hopes of succour, refused these conditions, he went back to Versailles, and left his generals to carry on his enterprize: which they did with so little success, that Grave and Maestricht alone remained to him of all the boasted conquests he had made; and even these he offered two years afterwards to restore, if by that concession he could have prevailed on the Dutch at that time to make peace with him. But they were not yet disposed to abandon their allies; for allies now they had. The emperor and the king of Spain had engaged in the quarrel against France, and many of the princes of the empire had done the same. Not all. The Bavarian continued obstinate in his neutrality, and, to mention no more, the Swedes made a great diversion



in favour of France in the empire; where the duke of Hanover abated their efforts as much as he could, for he was a zealous partizan of France; tho' the other princes of his house acted for the common cause. I descend into no more particulars. The war that Lewis the fourteenth conducted by attacking in so violent a manner the Dutch commonwealth, and by making so arbitrary an use of his first success, became general, in the Low Countries; in Spain, in Sicily, on the upper and lower Rhine, in Denmark, in Sweden, and in the provinces of Germany belonging to these two crowns, on the Mediterranean, the Ocean, and the Baltic. France supported this war with advantage on every side: and when your lordship considers in what manner it was carried on against her, you will not be surprized that she did so. Spain had spirit, but too little strength to maintain her power in Sicily, where Messina had revolted; to defend her frontier on that side of the Pyrenees, and to resist the great efforts of the French in the Low Countries. The empire was divided; and, even among the princes who acted against France, there was neither union in their councils, nor concert in their projects,



projects, nor order in preparations, nor vigour in execution; and to say the truth, there was not, in the whole confederacy, a man whose abilities could make him a match for the prince of Condé or the marshal of Turenne; nor many who were in any degree equal to LUXEMBURG, CRAQUY, SCHOMBERG, and other generals of inferior note, who commanded the armies of France. The emperor took this very time to make new invasions on the liberties of Hungary, and to oppress his protestant subjects. The prince of Orange alone acted with invincible firmness, like a patriot, and a hero. Neither the seductions of France nor those of England, neither the temptations of ambition nor those of private interest, could make him swerve from the true Interest of his country, nor from the common interest of Europe. He had raised more sieges, and lost more battles, it was said, than any general of his age had done. Be it so. But his defeats were manifestly due in great measure to circumstances independent on him; and that spirit, which even these defeats could not depress, was all his own. He had difficulties in his own commonwealth; the governors of the Spanish Low Countries crossed his mea-

sures sometimes; the German allies disappointed and broke them often: and it is not improbable that he was frequently betrayed. He was so perhaps even by SOUCHES, the imperial general; a Frenchman according to BAYLE, and a pensioner of LOUVOIS according to common report, and very strong appearances. He had not yet credit and authority sufficient to make him a centre of union to a whole confederacy, the soul that animated and directed so great a body. He came to be such afterwards; but at the time spoken of he could not take so great a part upon him. No other prince or general was equal to it: and the consequences of this defect appeared almost in every operation. France was surrounded by a multitude of enemies, all intent to demolish her power. But, like the builders of Babel, they spoke different languages: and as those could not build, these could not demolish, for want of understanding one another. France improved this advantage by her arms, and more by her negotiations. Nimeghen was, after Cologne, the scene of these. England was the mediating power, and I know not whether our CHARLES the second did not serve her purposes more usefully in the latter, and under

under the character of mediator, than he did or could have done by joining his arms to her's, and acting as her ally. The Dutch were induced to sign a treaty with him, that broke the confederacy, and gave great advantage to France: for the purport of it was to oblige France and Spain to make peace on a plan to be proposed to them, and no mention was made in it of the other allies that I remember. The Dutch were glad to get out of an expensive war. France promised to restore Maestricht to them, and Maestricht was the only place that remained unrecovered of all they had lost. They dropped Spain at Nimeghen as they had dropped France at Munster; but many circumstances concurred to give a much worse grace to their abandoning of Spain, than to their abandoning of France. I need not specify them: this only I would observe. When they made a separate peace at Munster, they left an ally who was in condition to carry on the war alone with advantage, and they presumed to impose no terms upon him: when they made a separate peace at Nimeghen, they abandoned an ally who was in no condition to carry on the war alone, and who was reduced to accept whatever terms



terms the common enemy prescribed. In their great distress, in one thousand six hundred and seventy three, they engaged to restore Maestricht to the Spaniards as soon as it should be retaken: it was not retaken, and they accepted it for themselves as the price of the separate peace they made with France. The Dutch had engaged farther, to make neither peace nor truce with the king of France, till that prince consented to restore to Spain all he had conquered since the Pyrenean treaty. But far from keeping this promise in any tolerable degree, Lewis the fourteenth acquired by the plan imposed on Spain at Nimeghen, besides the county of Burgundy, so many other countries and towns on the side of the ten Spanish provinces, that these, added to the places he kept of those which had been yielded to him by the treaty of Aix la Chapelle (for some of little consequence he restored) put into his hands the principal strength of that barrier against which we goaded ourselves almost to death in the last great war; and made good the saying of the marshal of SCHOMBERG, that to attack this barrier was to take the beast by his horns. I know very well what may be  
said



said to excuse the Dutch. The emperor was more intent to tyrannize his subjects on one side than to defend them on the other. He attempted little against France, and the little he did attempt was ill ordered, and worse executed. The assistance of the princes of Germany was often uncertain, and always expensive. Spain was already indebted to Holland for great sums; greater still must be advanced to her if the war continued: and experience shewed that France was able, and would continue, to prevail against her present enemies. The triple league had stopped her progress and obliged her to abandon the county of Burgundy; but Sweden was now engaged in the war on the side of France, as England had been in the beginning of it: and England was now privately favourable to her interests, as Sweden had been in the beginning of it. The whole ten provinces would have been subdued in the course of a few campaigns more: and it was better for Spain and the Dutch too, that part should be saved by accepting a sort of composition, than the whole be risked by refusing it. This might be alledged to excuse the conduct of the States General, in imposing hard terms on Spain; in making none for their

their other allies, and in signing alone: by which steps they gave France an opportunity that she improved with great dexterity of management, the opportunity of treating with the confederates one by one, and of beating them by detail in the cabinet, if I may so say, as she had often done in the field. I shall not compare these reasons, which were but too well founded in fact, and must appear plausible at least, with other considerations that might be, and were at the time, insisted upon. I confine myself to a few observations, which every knowing and impartial man must admit. Your lordship will observe first that the fatal principle of compounding with Lewis the fourteenth, from the time that his pretensions, his power, and the use he made of it, began to threaten Europe, prevailed still more at Nimeghen than it had prevailed at Aix: so that altho he did not obtain to the full all he attempted, yet the dominions of France were by common consent, on every treaty, more and more extended, her barriers on all sides were more and more strengthened; those of her neighbours were more and more weakened; and that power, which was to assert one day, against the rest of Europe the pretended rights of the house of Bourbon

Bourbon to the Spanish monarchy, was more and more established, and rendered truly formidable in such hands at least, during the course of the first eighteen years of the period. Your lordship will please to observe, in the second place, that the extreme weakness of one branch of Austria, and the miserable conduct of both; the poverty of some of the princes of the empire, and the disunion, and, to speak plainly, the mercenary policy of all of them; in short, the refined views, the false notions, and, to speak as plainly of my own as of other nations, the iniquity of the councils of England, not only hindered the growth of this power from being stopped in time, but nursed it up into strength almost insuperable by any future confederacy. A third observation is this. If the excuses made for the conduct of the Dutch at Nimeghen are not sufficient, they too must come in for their share in this condemnation even after the death of the DE WITS; as they were to be condemned most justly, during that administration, for abetting and favouring France. If these excuses, grounded on their inability to pursue any longer a war, the principal profit of which was to accrue to their confederates, for that

was



was the case after the year one thousand six hundred and seventy three, or one thousand six hundred and seventy four, and the principal burden of which was thrown on them by their confederates ; if these are sufficient, they should not have acted, for decency's sake as well as out of good policy, the part they did act in one thousand seven hundred and eleven and one thousand seven hundred and twelve, towards the late queen, who had complaints of the same kind, in a much higher degree and with circumstances much more aggravating, to make of them, of the emperor, and of all the princes of Germany ; and who was far from treating them and their other allies at that time, as they treated Spain and their other allies in one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight. Immediately after the Dutch had made their peace, that of Spain was signed with France. The emperor's treaty with this crown and that of Sweden was concluded in the following year : and Lewis the fourteenth being now at liberty to assist his ally, whilst he had tied up the powers with whom he had treated from assisting theirs, he soon forced the king of Denmark and the elector of Brandenburg to restore all they



they had taken from the Swedes, and now conclude the peace of the North. In all these treaties he gave the law, and he was now at the highest point of his grandeur. He continued at this point for several years, and in this height of his power he prepared those alliances against it, under the weight of which he was at last well-nigh oppressed, and might have been reduced as low as the general interest of Europe required, if some of the causes which worked now had not continued to work in his favour, and if his enemies had not proved, in their turn of fortune, as insatiable as prosperity had rendered him.

AFTER he had made peace with all the powers with whom he had been in war, he continued to vex both Spain and the empire, and to extend his conquests in the Low Countries, and on the Rhine, both by the pen and the sword. He erected the chambers of Metz and of Brisach, where his own subjects were prosecutors, witnesses, and judges all at once. Upon the decisions of these tribunals, he seized into his own hands, under the notion of dependencies and the pretence of reunions, whatever towns or districts of country tempted his ambition, or suited

ed his conveniency: and added by these and by other means, in the midst of peace, more territories to those the late treaties had yielded to him, than he could have got by continuing the War. He acted afterwards in the support of all this, without any bounds or limits. His glory was a reason for attacking Holland in one thousand six hundred and seventy-two, and his conveniency a reason for many of the attacks he made on others afterwards. He took Luxemburg by force, he stole Strasburg, he bought Casal, and whilst he waited the opportunity of acquiring to his family the crown of Spain, he was not without thoughts nor hopes perhaps of bringing into it the imperial crown likewise. Some of the cruelties he exercised in the empire may be ascribed to his disappointment in this view: I say some of them, because in the war that ended by the treaty of Nimeghen, he had already exercised many. Tho the French writers endeavour to slide over them, to palliate them, and to impute them particularly to the English that were in their service; for even this one of their writers has the front to advance: yet these cruelties, unheard of among civilized nations, must be granted to have been

been ordered by the councils, and executed by the arms of France, in the Palatinate, and in other parts.

IF LEWIS the fourteenth could have contented himself with the acquisitions that were confirmed to him by the treaties of one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight, and one thousand six hundred and seventy-nine, and with the authority and reputation which he then gained; it is plain that he would have prevented the alliances that were afterwards formed against him; and that he might have regained his credit amongst the princes of the empire, where he had one family-alliance by the marriage of his brother to the daughter of the elector Palatine, and another by that of his son to the sister of the elector of Bavaria, where Sweden was closely attached to him, and where the same principles of private interest would have soon attached others as closely. He might have remained not only the principal, but the directing power of Europe, and have held this rank with all the glory imaginable, till the death of the king of Spain, or some other object of great ambition, had determined him to act another part. But instead of this, he continued to vex and provoke all those who were,



were, unhappily for them, his neighbours, and that in many instances for trifles. An example of this kind occurs to me. On the death of the duke of Deux Ponts, he seized that little inconsiderable duchy, without any regard to the indisputable right of the kings of Sweden, to the services that crown had rendered him, or to the want he might have of that alliance hereafter. The consequence was, that Sweden entered with the emperor, the king of Spain, the elector of Bavaria, and the States General, into the alliance of guaranty, as it was called, about the year one thousand six hundred and eighty three, and into the famous league of Aulburg, in one thousand six hundred and eighty-six.

SINCE I have mentioned this league, and since we may date from it a more general, and more concerted opposition to France than there had been before; give me leave to recall some of the reflections that have presented themselves to my mind, in considering what I have read, and what I have heard related, concerning the passages of that time. They will be of use to form our judgment concerning later passages. If the king of France became an object of aversion on account of any invasions he made, any deviations from public



lic faith, any barbarities exercised where his  
 arms prevailed, or the persecution of his  
 protestant subjects; the emperor deserved  
 to be such an object, at least as much as he  
 on the same accounts. The emperor was  
 so too, but with this difference relatively to  
 the political system of the west. The Au-  
 strian ambition and bigotry exerted them-  
 selves in distant countries, whose interests were  
 not considered as a part of this system; for  
 otherwise there would have been as much  
 reason for assisting the people of Hungary  
 and of Transylvania against the emperor,  
 as there had been formerly for assisting the  
 people of the seven united provinces a-  
 gainst Spain, or as there had been lately for  
 assisting them against France: but the am-  
 bition and bigotry of Lewis the fourteenth  
 were exerted in the Low Countries, on the  
 Rhine, in Italy, and in Spain, in the very  
 midst of this system, if I may say so, and  
 with success that could not fail to subvert  
 it in time. The power of the house of  
 Austria, that had been feared too long,  
 was feared no longer: and that of the  
 house of Bourbon, by having been feared  
 too late, was now grown terrible. The  
 emperor was so intent on the establishment  
 of his absolute power in Hungary, that he  
 exposed the empire doubly to desolation  
 and

and ruin for the sake of it. He left the frontier almost quite defenceless on the side of the Rhine, against the inroads and ravages of France, and by shewing no mercy to the Hungarians nor keeping any faith with them, he forced that miserable people into alliances with the Turk, who invaded the empire and besieged Vienna. Even this event had no effect upon him. Your lordship will find, that SOBIESKI king of Poland, who had forced the Turks to raise the siege, and had fixed the imperial crown that tottered on his head, could not prevail on him to take those measures by which alone it was possible to cover the empire, to secure the king of Spain, and to reduce that power who was probably one day to dispute with him, this prince's succession. Tekeli and the malcontents made such demands as none but a tyrant could refuse, the preservation of their ancient privileges, liberty of conscience, the convocation of a free diet or parliament, and others of less importance. All was in vain. The war continued with them, and with the Turks, and France was left at liberty to push her enterprizes almost without opposition, against Germany and the Low Countries. The distress in both was so great, that the states general saw no other

ther expedient for stopping the progress of the French arms, than a cessation of hostilities, or a truce of twenty years; which they negotiated, and which was accepted by the emperor and the king of Spain, on the terms that LEWIS the fourteenth thought fit to offer. By these terms he was to remain in full and quiet possession of all he had acquired since the years one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight, and one thousand six hundred and seventy-nine; among which acquisitions that of Luxemburg and that of Strasburb were comprehended. The conditions of this truce were so advantageous to France, that all her intrigues were employed to obtain a definitive treaty of peace upon the same conditions. But this was neither the interest nor the intention of the other contracting powers. The imperial arms had been very successful against the Turks. This success, as well as the troubles that followed upon it in the Ottoman armies, and at the Porte, gave reasonable expectation of concluding a peace on that side: and, this peace concluded, the emperor and the empire and the king of Spain would have been in a much better posture to treat with France. With these views that were wise and just, the league of Aufburg was made  
between

between the emperor, the kings of Spain and Sweden as princes of the empire, and the other circles and princes. This league was purely defensive. An express article declared it to be so : and as it had no other regard, it was not only conformable to the laws and constitutions of the empire, and to the practice of all nations, but even to the terms of the act of truce so lately concluded. This pretence therefore for breaking the truce, seizing the electorate of Cologne, invading the Palatinate, besieging Philipsburg, and carrying unexpected and undeclared war into the empire could not be supported : nor is it possible to read the reasons published by France at this time, and drawn from her fears of the imperial power, without laughter. As little pretence was there to complain, that the emperor refused to convert at once the truce into a definitive treaty ; since if he had done so, he would have confirmed in a lump, and without any discussion, all the arbitrary decrees of those chambers, or courts, that France had erected to cover her usurpations ; and would have given up almost a sixth part of the provinces of the empire, that France one way or other had possessed herself of. The pretensions of the dutchess of Orleans on the succession  
of



of her father, and her brother, which were disputed by the then elector Palatine and were to be determined by the laws and customs of the empire, afforded as little pretence for beginning this war, as any of the former allegations. The exclusion of the cardinal of Furstenberg, who had been elected to the archbishopric of Cologne, was capable of being aggravated : but even in this case his most christian majesty opposed his judgment and his authority against the judgment and authority of that holy father, whose eldest son he was proud to be called. In short, the true reason why Lewis the fourteenth began that cruel war with the empire, two years after he had concluded a cessation of hostilities for twenty, was this : he resolved to keep what he had got ; and therefore he resolved to encourage the Turks to continue the war. He did this effectually, by invading Germany at the very instant when the Sultan was suing for peace. Notwithstanding this, the Turks were in treaty again the following year : and good policy should have obliged the emperor, since he could not hope to carry on this war and that against France at the same time, with vigour and effect, to conclude

a peace with the least dangerous enemy of the two. The decision of his disputes with France could not be deferred, his designs against the Hungarians were in part accomplished, for his son was declared king, and the settlement of that crown in his family was made, and the rest of these as well as those that he formed against the Turks might be deferred. But the councils of Vienna judged differently, and insisted even at this critical moment on the most exorbitant terms; on some of such a nature, that the Turks shewed more humanity and a better sense of religion in refusing, than they in asking them. Thus the war went on in Hungary, and proved a constant diversion in favour of France, during the whole course of that which LEWIS the fourteenth began at this time; for the treaty of Carlowitz was posterior to that of Ryswic. The Empire, Spain, England, and Holland engaged in the war with France; and on them the emperor left the burden of it. In the short war of one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, he was not so much as a party, and instead of assisting the king of Spain, which it must be owned he was in no good condition of doing, he bargained

gained for dividing that prince's succession, as I have observed above. In the war of one thousand six hundred and seventy-two he made some feeble efforts. In this of one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight he did still less: and in the war which broke out at the beginning of the present century he did nothing, at least after the first campaign in Italy, and after the engagements that England and Holland took by the grand alliance. In a word, from the time that an opposition to France became a common cause in Europe, the house of Austria has been a clog upon it in many instances, and of considerable assistance to it in none. The accession of England to this cause, which was brought about by the revolution of one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight, might have made amends, and more than amends one would think, for this defect, and have thrown superiority of power and of success on the side of the confederates, with whom she took part against France. This I say might be imagined, without over-rating the power of England, or undervaluing that of France; and it was imagined at that time. How it proved otherwise in the event; how France came triumphant out of the war

war that ended by the treaty of Ryfwic, and tho she gave up a great deal, yet preserved the greatest and the best part of her conquests and acquisitions made since the treaties of Westphalia, and the Pyrenees; how she acquired by the gift of Spain that whole monarchy for one of her princes, tho she had no reason to expect the least part of it without a war at one time, nor the great lot of it even by a war at any time; in short how she wound up advantageously the ambitious system she had been fifty years in weaving; how she concluded a war in which she was defeated on every side, and wholly exhausted, with little diminution of the provinces and barriers acquired to France, and with the quiet possession of Spain and the Indies to a prince of the house of Bourbon: all this, my lord, will be the subject of your researches, when you come down to the latter part of the last period of modern history.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.





